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Memoir of the Rev. John Rodgers, D.D.

Samuel Miller, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (Old School). Board of Publication

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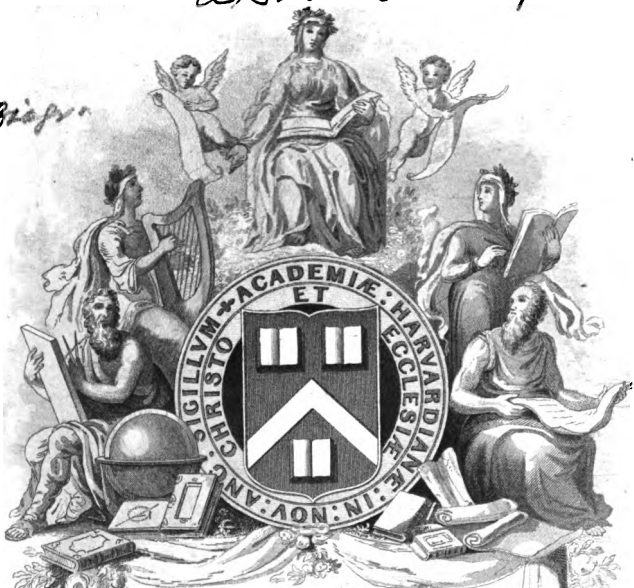

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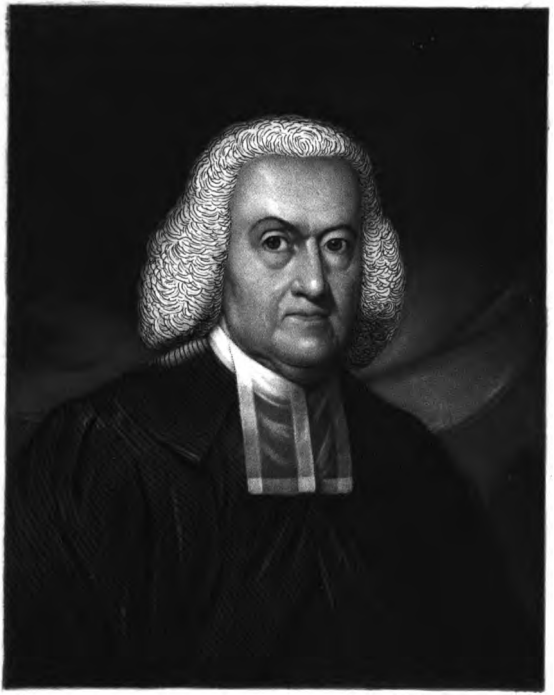

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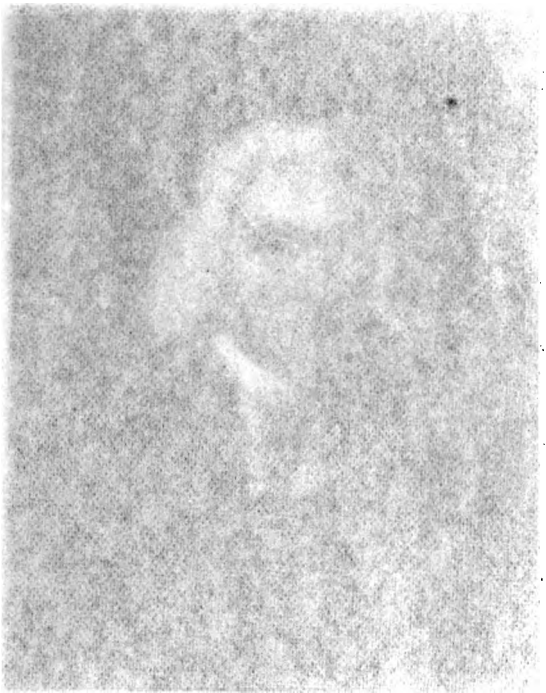

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MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. JOHN RODGERS, D.D.

LATE PASTOR OF THE WALL STREET AND BRICK CHURCHES,
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.,

Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton.

ABRIDGED FROM THE ORIGINAL EDITION OF 1813.

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TO THE MINISTERS

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN THE UNITED STATES.

REVEREND FATHERS

AND BRETHREN,

THE character and ministry of the venerable man with whose memoirs you are here presented, were dear to you all. Most of you knew him personally; and all of you revered him as one of the Fathers of the American Church. Knowing this, I had no doubt that you would be gratified with seeing some account of his long, laborious, and useful life; and knowing also, that no one could so naturally be expected to give this account as

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his surviving colleague, who served with him as a son in the gospel, for more than seventeen years, I did not hesitate to make the attempt.

In the progress of the undertaking, I have greatly exceeded the limits originally prescribed to myself. What was at first intended to be a pamphlet of moderate size, has insensibly grown into a volume. Whether any apology ought to be made for such an extension of the work, can be ascertained only by the perusal.

Such as it is, allow me to inscribe it, most respectfully, to you. As I wrote under the habitual impression, that it would be my own fault if I did not profit by the contemplation of the character exhibited in the following pages; so I will

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also frankly confess, that I was not a little encouraged and animated by the hope, that the work, with all its imperfections, might not be entirely useless, among others, to my fathers and brethren in the ministry. One thing is certain, that if the portrait here drawn be even tolerably just, it cannot be viewed wholly without benefit by those who have a taste for studying and copying excellence.

I shall not be surprised if it should be imagined by some, that I have discovered, in the ensuing sketch, more of the partiality of friendship, than of the sternness of historical justice. I can only say, that it has been my sacred aim to exhibit every feature that was attempted to be portrayed, true to the original. If I have in any case failed, the error was certainly

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unintentional. But it is a consolation to know, that, even after making the most liberal allowance on this score that can be required, there will still remain a large and solid mass of personal and professional worth, which we can scarcely too often, or too respectfully, contemplate. We may say concerning the character in question, what I have somewhere met with, as said concerning another—"Take away nine parts out of ten, even of its virtues, and there will be still enough left to admire, to imitate, and to love."

For the introduction of so many minute details respecting the church in New York, I hope to be forgiven. Though they cannot fail of being comparatively uninteresting to many readers; yet by another, and perhaps equally large class,

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they will be considered as among the most valuable parts of the volume. There are not a few, indeed, who feel so great an interest in the affairs of that church, that they would be glad to possess a history still more minute of its rise and progress. I have been studious of the gratification of such persons, so far as my plan permitted. Nor can I forbear to add, that the sentiments of attachment and gratitude which I have long cherished, for that portion of the flock of Christ, with which my deceased colleague laboured for nearly half a century, and which I have had the happiness of serving for more than nineteen years, led me to take peculiar pleasure in noticing and recording every thing important concerning it, which came to my knowledge.

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That we may all have grace given us to imitate our departed fellow-labourer, so far as he served our common Master; and that the following account of his life may be made, in some degree, to promote that great cause, in the advancement of which he lived and died, and to which we, as ministers, have solemnly professed to devote ourselves, is the fervent prayer of

Reverend Fathers and Brethren,

Your fellow servant in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

SAMUEL MILLER.

NEW YORK, FEB. 25, 1813.

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MEMOIR.

CHAPTER I.

From his Birth, to his Licensure to preach the Gospel.

A MODERN writer, who, to no ordinary talents, unites great eccentricity and great errors, recommends the erection and preservation of some memorial of every one that dies. The sentiment embraced in this plan is as false, as the plan itself is chimerical. The celebrated English moralist, Dr. Johnson, is, undoubtedly correct, when he observes, that there are "many characters which ought never to be drawn." "There have been men," he adds, "splendidly wicked, whose endowments threw a brightness on their crimes, and whom scarcely any villany made perfectly detestable, because they never could be wholly divested of their excellencies; but such have been, in all ages, the great corrupters of the world, and their resemblance ought no more to be preserved, than the art of murdering without pain."* With respect to many who are born and die in our world,

* Rambler, No. 4.

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the sooner they are forgotten the better. As they were cumberers of the ground while they lived; so their memorial would no less encumber the page of history, or the tablet of tradition. It is a real blessing that, according to the divine declaration, "the name of the wicked shall rot."

But there is another mistake, much more prevalent than that which has been noticed. It is the mistake of those who run into the opposite extreme. They suppose that no life ought to be recorded and transmitted to posterity, unless it be that of one who has immortalized himself, either by his writings, or by a course of distinguished action on the theatre of the great world. Such a principle, if admitted, would undoubtedly exclude from the shelves of Biography, some of the most useful characters that ever adorned human society. It is, therefore, a false principle. And while it is freely granted that the public ought not to be troubled with the life of every good, or of every useful man; it may be confidently maintained, that whenever a case occurs in which a life has been marked with respectable talents, eminent piety, exemplary diligence, and extensive usefulness, such a life, if survivors are disposed to profit by the contemplation of it, ought not to be withheld from them.

On this principle the author of the following memoir presumes to lay it before the public. The venerable subject of it was never, indeed, considered, either by himself or by others, as belonging to the class of those extraordinary men, who, by the splendour of their genius, the variety and extent of their learning, or the number of their publications, excite the admiring gaze of mankind. But if solid and respectable talents; if acquire-

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ments, which enabled him to act his part, in various important stations, with uniform honour; if patriarchal dignity; if sound practical wisdom, and a long life of eminent and extensive usefulness, be worthy of grateful remembrance, and of respectful imitation, then the life of Dr. Rodgers is worthy of being written and perused. There is a day coming, and the estimate of Christians ought now to anticipate it, when such a character will appear infinitely more worthy of contemplation and regard than that of the most splendid improver of human science, or the most admired leader of victorious legions, that was ever immortalized by the historian's pen. In that day it will be found, that bearing the image of Christ, and a gracious relation to his person, is the highest nobility; and that services done for the Saviour's cause, will obtain the only lasting reward.

With these reflections in view, the attention of the reader is requested to the following Memoir.

John Rodgers was born in the town of Boston, in Massachusetts, on the fifth day of August, A. D. 1727. He was the son of Mr. Thomas Rodgers, and Elizabeth Baxter, his wife, who removed from the city of Londonderry, in Ireland, to Boston, in the year 1721. There they resided until 1728; in the autumn of which year, when the subject of this memoir was a little more than a year old, they left Boston, and transferred their residence to the city of Philadelphia. They had two sons and six daughters. James, the elder son, died early. John, the younger, was the comfort and the pride of his parents while they lived, and survived, for a number of years, all the rest of the family.

His parents, early discovering in their younger son more than usual sobriety, reflection, and taste for knowledge, bestowed much pains on his educa-

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tion. His pious mother, in particular, was unwearied in her endeavours to form his tender mind and to imbue it with the principles of piety. At the age of about twelve years he became the subject of serious impressions, and evinced much thoughtfulness and concern respecting his eternal interest. At this time he had frequent opportunities of attending on the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, that "prince of preachers," whose gifts were, perhaps, more wonderful, and whose labours were probably more eminently blessed, to the conversion of souls, than those of any other individual, since the days of the Apostles. The preaching of this herald of the cross was blessed to young Rodgers in a very remarkable manner. That he attended upon it with great interest, and with deep impressions, even at that early age, will abundantly appear from the following anecdote, which he often related to his particular friends with much tenderness and pleasure.

It is generally known that Mr. Whitefield often preached in the open air; sometimes because houses of worship were shut against him, and at others because his audiences were too large to be accommodated in any ordinary building. In Philadelphia, he often stood on the outside steps of the court-house, in Market, at the corner of Second street, and from that station addressed admiring thousands who crowded the street below. On one of these occasions, young Rodgers was not only present, but pressed as near to the person of his favourite preacher as possible; and to testify his respect, held a lantern for his accommodation. Soon after the sermon began, he became so absorbed in the subject, and, at length, so deeply impressed, and strongly agitated, that he was scarcely

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able to stand; the lantern fell from his hand, and was dashed in pieces; and that part of the audience in the immediate vicinity of the speaker's station, were not a little interested, and for a few moments discomposed by the occurrence.*

The impressions thus begun, were confirmed and deepened, and resulted, in a short time afterwards, as he hoped, when he was but little more than twelve years of age, in a saving knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ, as the only refuge and hope of his soul, and in a cordial devotedness to his service.

From this period he resolved, if God should enable him, to devote himself to the service of Christ, in the work of the gospel ministry. With this view he immediately began the study of the learned languages, under the direction of Mr. Stevenson,

* A subsequent circumstance, connected with this event, and not less remarkable, is worthy of being recorded. Mr. Whitefield, in the course of his fifth visit to America, about the year 1754, on a journey from the southward, called at St. George's, in Delaware, where Mr. Rodgers was then settled in the Gospel ministry, and spent some time with him. In the course of this visit, Mr. Rodgers being one day riding with his visitant in the close carriage in which the latter usually travelled, asked him whether he recollected the occurrence of the little boy, who was so much affected with his preaching, as to let his lantern fall. Mr. Whitefield answered, "O yes! I remember it well; and have often thought I would give almost any thing in my power to know who that little boy was, and what had become of him." Mr. Rodgers replied, with a smile, "I am that little boy!" Mr. Whitefield, with tears of joy, started from his seat, took him in his arms, and with strong emotion remarked, that he was the *fourteenth* person then in the ministry whom he had discovered in the course of that visit to America, of whose hopeful conversion he had been the instrument.

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an instructor of reputation from Ireland, who, a short time before, had set up a grammar school in Philadelphia. With him he remained a few months, much to his own profit, and to the satisfaction of his preceptor. About the year 1741, he was removed to a grammar school, shortly before erected on the Neshaminy, a few miles from Philadelphia, by the Rev. Mr. Roan, an eminent clergyman of the Presbyterian church. In this school he continued several years. Here he distinguished himself by his diligence, his love of order, and his exemplary deportment, and no less by the decision and ardour with which he manifested his love of religion. At the age of fourteen, he regularly maintained family worship in the house in which he boarded; and at the same tender age, his religious deportment and conversation were such, that even pious adults did not disdain to attend to them as sources of pleasure and profit. An excellent woman, a number of years since deceased, who spent the early part of her life in Mr. Roan's congregation, used to mention that she often contrived, on the Sabbath, when she went to church, to walk a few feet behind young Rodgers, "on purpose to hear his pious and sensible conversation with his classmates."*

In the summer of the year 1743, when this excellent youth was sixteen years of age, he was removed from Mr. Roan's school, with a view to his pursuing the higher branches of study at some other seminary; and there being, at that time, no college nearer than at New Haven, in Connecticut, on the one hand, or Williamsburg, in Virginia, on

* Communicated in a letter from Dr. Rush, for which see a subsequent part of this volume.

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the other, he was sent to an academy of high reputation at Fagg's Manor, in Chester county, Pennsylvania, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Samuel Blair, who was one of the most respectable scholars and divines of his day.* Here he completed his academical studies, including the moral and physical sciences, as well as the languages, and made considerable progress in the study of theology.

At Mr. Blair's academy, Mr. Rodgers was so happy as to find a number of young gentlemen, of excellent talents, and of eminent piety, preparing for the Gospel ministry, in whose friendship he found much comfort, and whose society contributed not a little to his improvement. Among these was Mr. Samuel Davies, afterwards so highly distinguished for his pulpit talents, and who died President of the College of New Jersey.† Among this

* The Rev. Samuel Blair was a native of Ireland. He came to America very early in life, and was one of the students of the Rev. William Tennent, at his celebrated Log College, on the Neshaminy. He was considered not only as one of the most learned and able, but also as one of the most pious and excellent men that ever adorned the American Church. He died in 1751.

† The Rev. Samuel Davies was born in the county of New Castle, in the State of Delaware, November 3, 1721 He received the greater part of his academic and theological education under the care of the Rev. Mr. Blair, of Fagg's Manor, and was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of New Castle, in 1745. Soon after this event he travelled into Virginia, where he settled, and remained highly respected and useful for a number of years. In 1753 he was chosen by the Synod of New York, at the solicitation of the Trustees of New Jersey College, to accompany the Rev. Gilbert Tennent on a mission to Great Britain and Ireland, to solicit benefactions for that College. In 1759, he was elected to succeed Mr. Edwards in the Presidency of the same Institution. In this station he remained but eighteen months, being removed by death

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number, also, was Mr. Alexander Cumming, who became, early in life, one of the ministers of the church in New York, and who held a high place among the ministers of his day. To these may be added Messrs. Robert Smith, James Finley, Hugh Henry, and a number of others, who afterwards became distinguished clergymen. With several of these gentlemen, and especially with Mr. Davies, he formed an intimacy of the most close and endearing kind, which he often mentioned in terms which evinced that he considered it as one of the most happy circumstances of his life, and that he remembered it with the deepest interest.

It is an old observation, that men assist in forming each other. Hence considerable men are apt to arise in clusters. Mr. Rodgers was so happy as to receive his education at a period when some of the most eminent divines that ever adorned the American Church, were intrusted with the direction of her affairs, and with the formation of her ministry. It was not difficult to perceive, from the whole of his ministerial character and deportment, that he had enjoyed the advantage of early and intimate intercourse with those venerable, and excellent men; and that he had profited much by the advantage. If there was a formality in their character at which modern flippancy is disposed to smile; there was, also, a solid worth, an apostolic dignity, a primitive piety, and a fervent zeal, which would to God were more frequently to be found, at the present day, in the Church of Christ!

in January, 1761, in the thirty-seventh year of his age. The genius, taste, learning, and eminent piety of President Davies are so well known, that it is unnecessary to dwell on them here.

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Though it appears, from the preceding statement, that the subject of this memoir did not receive what is commonly styled a College education, he certainly received an education incomparably better than what usually passes under that title. The classical literature, especially, which was possessed by the Tennents, the Alisons, and the Blairs, at that period, was much more deep and accurate than is commonly acquired at the present day, by most American scholars. They received it from the best European sources; and their first pupils, like themselves, were generally well instructed, and bore no mean resemblance to the literary stature of their masters. That young Rodgers had able instructors, at this period, and improved his time, is apparent, from the Latin discourse, found among his papers, which he delivered, as a part of his early trials before the Presbytery; and also from the numerous and apt quotations from the ancient classics, which his memory enabled him to make, on proper occasions, to the end of life. From the discourse just mentioned, it appears, that, to the Latin and Greek languages, he had added some knowledge of the Hebrew, when he left the academy.

Many persons are apt to suppose, that the race of divines who flourished in our country seventy or eighty years ago, though pious and excellent men had a very scanty supply of books, and in many cases, a still more scanty education, compared with the divines of later years, and especially of the present day. This opinion is not only erroneous, but grossly so. Those venerable fathers of the American Church were more deeply learned than most of their sons. They read more, and thought more, than we are ready to imagine. The

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greater part of the books of ancient learning, and ponderous erudition, which are now to be found on this side of the Atlantic, were imported, and studied by those great and good men. Original works are actually in fewer hands, in our day, compared with the number of readers, than in theirs. They read solidly and deeply: we hurry over compends and indexes. They studied systematically, as well as extensively; our reading is more desultory, as well as more superficial. We have more of the *belles lettres* polish; but as biblical critics, and as profound theologians, we must undoubtedly yield to them the palm of excellence.

Mr. Rodgers, having pursued his theological studies for some time with Mr. Blair, returned to his father's in the city of Philadelphia, and finished them under the direction of the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Tennent, who had then become the pastor of the second Presbyterian Church, in that city.*

* The Rev. Gilbert Tennent was born in Ireland, February 5th, 1703. He was the eldest son of the Rev. William Tennent, who had received Episcopal ordination in that country, and emigrated to America in the year 1718. Soon after his arrival he renounced Episcopacy, and was admitted a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. He was one of the most eminently pious, useful, and learned ministers, especially in classical literature, that the American Church ever had. He educated his four sons, Gilbert, William, John, and Charles, (together with a number of other young men,) at his Log-College, on the Neshaminy; and had the satisfaction of seeing them all useful ministers. This venerable man died at Neshaminy, May 6th, 1746, in the seventy-third year of his age. His son, Gilbert, in the year 1743, established a new Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, chiefly composed of those who were denominated the converts and followers of Mr. Whitefield. He was a bold, ardent, practical, and unusually impressive preacher. He died in 1764, in the sixty-second year of his age.

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In the month of June, in the year 1747, he appeared before the Presbytery of New Castle, and entered on the usual trials for licensure to preach the gospel. Having passed these with more than usual approbation, he was licensed, on the 14th day of October, in the same year; and soon gave, in his public ministrations, as well as in his private deportment, those presages of future excellence and usefulness, which were afterwards so happily realized.

CHAPTER II.

From his Licensure, till his settlement in St. George's.

IMMEDIATELY after his licensure, Mr. Rodgers, by the appointment of his Presbytery, began to supply the numerous vacant churches under their care; and spent the following winter among those more immediately in the vicinity of his usual residence. In the spring of the year 1748, Mr. Davies, (afterwards President Davies,) received a call from the people of Hanover, Henrico, and three other neighbouring congregations, in Virginia, to settle among them as their pastor. This call, in the month of April, of that year, he accepted; and immediately set out to the scene of his intended pastoral labours. Mr. Davies, however, made it one condition of his accepting this call, that his young friend, Mr. Rodgers, (to whom he was particularly attached,* and whose popular ta-

* The attachment between President Davies and Dr. Rodgers was unusually ardent and uniform. The former named one of his sons John Rodgers, after his friend.

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lents he had no doubt would be eminently useful in that country,) should accompany him into Virginia, and assist him in his evangelical labours there for a few months. Mr. Rodgers consented to go. The Presbytery made the appointment accordingly: and the two friends, without loss of time, prosecuted their journey together, and reached Virginia toward the latter end of April.

This journey was attended with an occurrence too remarkable to be omitted. Mr. Rodgers, from his earliest years, had been unusually fearful of lightning and thunder. So great, indeed, was his agitation and suffering during thunder storms, that the approach or prospect of one made him unhappy. He had taken much pains to get the better of this weakness; but, to use his own language, "neither reason, philosophy, nor religion availed any thing;" and it was the more distressing, because both he and his friends feared it might seriously interfere with his ministerial usefulness. But in the course of the journey under consideration, he was entirely delivered from this infirmity, and by means the most unlikely that could be imagined to produce such a happy effect.

While he and Mr. Davies, after they had entered Virginia, were riding together one afternoon, they were overtaken by one of the most tremendous thunder storms ever known in that part of the country. They were in the midst of an extensive forest, and several miles distant from any house

The latter, on his part, was not less affectionate and constant in his testimonies of regard. He received Mr. Davies' mother, after the premature and lamented death of her son, into his family, where she was treated with filial kindness and respect, for a considerable time, and where she died.

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which offered even tolerable shelter, either to them or their horses. The storm came up with great rapidity; the lightning and thunder were violent beyond all description; and the whole scene such as might be supposed to appal the stoutest heart. Their horses, terrified and trembling, refused to proceed. They were obliged to alight; and standing by their beasts, expected every moment to be precipitated into eternity by the resistless element. Providentially, however, they escaped unhurt: and the consequence was as wonderful, as the preservation was happy. From that hour Mr. Rodgers was entirely delivered from the infirmity which had long given him so much distress! On whatever principle we may attempt to account for the fact; whether we suppose that he was so completely saturated with fear on the occasion, as to be, ever afterwards, unsusceptible of its influence from the same source; in other words, that he was literally "frightened out of his fear;" or whether we suppose that so signal an experience of Divine protection, was made the means of inspiring him, thence forward, with a larger share of pious confidence, when a similar danger arose:—whether we resolve the fact into one or the other of these principles, still the fact itself is unquestionable, that during the whole of his after life, he displayed an unusual degree of composure and self-possession amidst the severest thunder-storms.

The rise and progress of the body of Presbyterians in Virginia, to whom the labours of Mr. Davies and Mr. Rodgers were now directed, deserve some notice before we proceed. They deserve this notice not only as being remarkably interesting in themselves, but also as throwing light

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on the treatment received by the subject of this memoir, in the course of the southern mission of which we are speaking.

The first settlers in Virginia were generally connected with the Episcopal Church. Episcopacy was early established in the Dominion, by law, and remained so until the revolution which terminated in American Independence.* A very small number of Presbyterians from Scotland, and a still smaller number of dissenters from South Britain, were thinly scattered through the colony; but they were so few and so destitute of religious zeal, that no ecclesiastical organization different from that of the establishment seems to have been thought of, (excepting on a small scale, on the Eastern

* In 1618, a law was passed in Virginia, which enacted that "every person should go to church on Sundays and holydays, or lie neck and heels that night, and be a slave to the Colony the following week." For the second offence, he was to be a slave for a month; and for the third, a year and a day.—*Stith's Hist.*, p. 148. In 1642, a law passed, which enacted that "no minister shall be permitted to officiate in the country but such as shall produce to the Governor a testimonial that he hath received his ordination from some Bishop in England; and shall then subscribe to be conformable to the orders and constitutions of the Church of England: and if any other person, pretending himself to be a minister, shall, contrary to this act, presume to teach or preach, publicly or privately, the Governor and Council are hereby desired and empowered to suspend and silence the person so offending; and upon his obstinate persistence, to compel him to depart the country with the first convenience."—*Laws of Virginia, edit.* 1769, p. 3. Several of these laws were afterwards repealed, or their penalties mitigated; but they remained severe until the revolution. We are accustomed to smile at what are called the blue-laws of Connecticut, but it would be difficult to find any thing in them equal to the first act above-mentioned.

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Shore, as will hereafter appear,) until between the years 1730 and 1743. During that period, a few Presbyterian churches were formed under circumstances too remarkable and interesting to pass unnoticed.

About the year 1730, there resided in the great Northern Neck, between the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers, a certain John Organ, a pious schoolmaster, from Scotland. Soon after his establishment in that country, finding that there was no place of public worship in his immediate neighbourhood, and that a large portion of the people wholly disregarded the ordinances of religion, and were sunk in carelessness and profligacy, his spirit was stirred within him to attempt something for the spiritual advantage of his neighbours. Accordingly, he collected, in private houses, such of them as were tolerably decent and sober, and had any sense of religion, and read to them the Scriptures, and other pious writings, accompanied with prayer and singing. These exercises were much blessed to the awakening and conversion of a number of souls. For several years nothing more was attempted; especially as the frowns of government were soon directed towards this little flock, and the laws against dissenters rigorously enforced against them. In a short time, however, after the formation of the Synod of Philadelphia, the people of Organ's neighbourhood made an application to that body for supplies. This request was granted; and the Rev. Mr. Anderson, who had before resided in New York, but was then settled in Pennsylvania, was sent by the Synod to preach among them, to organize a church, and to intercede with the government on their behalf. Mr. Anderson succeeded in attaining all these objects. He preach-

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ed to great acceptance, and with much impression; and formed a church, which, by his labours, and those of other ministers, was considerably enlarged and edified.

While these things were going on in one neighbourhood, events of a similar kind, but still more extraordinary, were taking place in another.

In Hanover, and the adjacent counties, the aspect of religion and morals had long been extremely low and discouraging. The established clergy where many of them notoriously profligate in their lives, and very few among them preached, or appeared to understand, the gospel of Christ. It was under these circumstances that some pious books, or fragments of books, which fell into the hands of a few individuals, were made the means of awakening them to a concern for their eternal interest, and of commencing a work of grace which was afterwards most powerfully and happily extended.

Boston's Fourfold State was one of these books. A few leaves of this inestimable work, which had belonged to a pious Scotch woman, fell into the hands of a wealthy planter. Being pleased and surprised at what he read, and finding the title page among the leaves, he sent a commission, with his next cargo of tobacco, to procure for him a copy of the book. He obtained it; and the more he read the more he found himself interested in its contents; until he was brought, as there was every reason to believe, to a saving acquaintance with the truth as it is in Jesus. Another wealthy planter, Mr. Samuel Morris, of Hanover, having providentially fallen in with an old copy of Luther on the Galatians, perused it with eagerness and astonishment. He there found representations

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of gospel truth, such as he had never met with before, and widely different from what he had been accustomed to receive from the pulpit.*

* It will be considered, by many, not a little remarkable, that those who loved and admired Boston's Fourfold State, (a strongly Calvinistic work,) should equally relish Luther on the Galatians; and should consider themselves as finding the same precious system of truth in both. An impression seems to have been received by multitudes, that Luther and Calvin differed materially on important points, particularly on the subject of the divine decrees, or the doctrine of sovereign election. Nothing can be more erroneous than this impression. Excepting in the single article of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, there was the most entire harmony of opinion between these two great Reformers. Those who wish to see what Luther believed on the doctrines of predestination and grace, would do well to consult his book *De Servo Arbitrio*, in which they will find as high-toned Calvinism as ever was penned. Indeed, all the eminent Reformers, both in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe, were agreed on these points. The leading men among them were all doctrinal Calvinists. It is notorious, that, for a number of years, during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth, and James I. Calvin's Institutes was the great standard book put by authority into the hands of the students of divinity in the British Universities, and considered as the foundation of their studies. This is acknowledged by Heylin and others, in terms of the bitterest regret. Nay, by a convocation held at Oxford, that book was recommended to the general study of the nation. Let those who deny the Calvinism of the early Reformers and standards of the Church of England, impartially consult Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, the Lambeth Articles, (drawn up and signed by Archbishop Whitgift, and declared by him to be true, and corresponding with the doctrines professed in the Church of England,) the writings of Hall, Davenant, and Horsely, and they will perceive and be ashamed of their mistake. But to return; it is certain that Luther was not only a strong doctrinal

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Deeply affected with the view of human nature, and of the way of salvation, which this work exhibits, he never ceased to read, to inquire, and to pray, until he found consolation in Christ, as the Lord his righteousness and strength. Nor was this all. It is one of the glorious distinctions of the genuine gospel of the grace of God, that wherever its power is felt in the heart, and in proportion to the degree in which that power is felt, there will always be manifested a tender love to the souls of men, and an ardent zeal for spreading the knowledge of Jesus Christ: not the warmth of mere party zeal; nor the strange fire of bigotry and contention for modes and forms; but an affectionate desire that men may be saved, and that Christ in all things may be glorified. Such was the spirit excited in this remarkable convert. He no sooner had obtained a comfortable hope for himself than he was filled with concern for the spiritual welfare of his neighbours. He invited them to come to his house, and to hear him read passages from the book which had been so much blessed to his own soul. They attended, particularly on the Sabbath, for this purpose. At first, and indeed for a considerable time afterwards, no other exercise than that of reading was attempted. Extemporary prayer was a thing so unknown among them, that none durst attempt it. Their whole time, when together, was employed in

Calvinist, but also a Presbyterian; that is to say, he early and uniformly maintained the parity of ministers by divine right, and the Scriptural authority of Presbyters to ordain. He himself, though only a Presbyter, freely ordained, at an early period of his Protestant ministry, and he did the same only a few days before his death.

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reading; and Mr. Morris, being an excellent reader, was enabled, to a very unusual degree, to keep up their attention; and the Spirit of God visibly attended the exercise; a number of persons were seriously impressed, and some hopefully converted. In 1743, a young Scotch gentleman, having received from his friends at home a volume of Whitefield's Sermons, published a short time before, put them into the hands of Mr. Morris, who perused them himself with much profit, and soon began to read them to his assembled neighbours. The plainness and fervour of these discourses were blessed to the awakening and hopeful conversion of several persons. The curiosity of some, and the serious impressions of others increasing, the people began to meet on week-days for this exercise, as well as on the Sabbath. In a short time Mr. Morris' house became too small to accommodate those who attended; on which he and his neighbours determined to erect a building expressly for their accommodation at these religious meetings. This building was commonly called "Morris' Reading-House," and was generally crowded with hearers. The knowledge of these circumstances spreading, Mr. Morris was invited to attend at several distant places, for the purpose of reading the books, and especially Whitefield's Sermons, which had been so acceptable and useful in his immediate neighbourhood. He complied with these invitations; and thus the religious awakening and anxiety became considerably extended.

About this time, Mr. Morris and his friends attracted the notice of government. Their absenting themselves from their parish churches, contrary, as was alleged, to the laws of the land, was

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considered and treated as an offence.* They were called upon by the court to assign their reason for this absence, and to declare to what denomination they belonged. The latter question embarrassed them not a little. Having known scarcely any other denomination of dissenters besides Quakers; and not being aware that any body of people then on earth embraced the same opinions on the subject of religion with themselves, they were at a loss what name to assume. In this embarrassment they begged of the court a little time to retire, and determine by what name they chose to be known. After a short consultation, recollecting that Luther was a noted reformer, and that some of his works had been of peculiar service among them, they resolved to take their denomination from him; they accordingly returned into court, and declared themselves Lutherans. By this answer the members of the court were embarrassed in their turn, not finding any law or precedent which directed them how to proceed against Lutherans; and, after a little consideration, dismissed Mr. Morris and his friends without pursuing their design further at that time.

Things were in this situation, when, in the year 1743, the Rev. William Robinson, a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick,† who had

* Mr. Morris and a number of his friends were repeatedly fined by the court for absenting themselves from the established worship. He himself, being considered as a kind of leader, was treated more severely than the rest. He paid near twenty fines.

† Mr. Robinson was the son of a wealthy Quaker in England. Being permitted to pay a visit of a few weeks to an aunt in the city of London, from whom he had considerable expectations, he greatly overstaid the time which had been allowed him; and becoming deeply in-

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been ordained *sine titulo*, with a view to his being sent as an Evangelist to preach the gospel on the

volved in the dissipations of the town, he incurred large debts, which he knew his father would never pay, and which his aunt refused to discharge. In this situation, fearing to return home, and unable to remain longer in London, he determined to quit his native country, and seek his fortune in America. In this determination his aunt reluctantly acquiesced, and furnished him with a small sum of money for the purpose. Soon after his arrival in America, he had recourse, for subsistence, to teaching a school in New Jersey, within the bounds of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. He had been, for some time, engaged in this business, without any practical sense of religion, when it pleased God to bring him to a knowledge of himself, and of the way of salvation, in a remarkable manner. He was riding at a late hour, one evening, when the moon and stars shone with unusual brightness, and when every thing around him was calculated to excite reflection. While he was meditating on the beauty and grandeur of the scene which the firmament presented, and was saying to himself, "How transcendently glorious must be the Author of all this beauty and grandeur!" the thought struck him with the suddenness and the force of lightning, "But what do I know of this God? Have I ever sought his favour, or made him my friend?" This happy impression, which proved, by its permanency and its effects, to have come from the best of all sources, never left him until he took refuge in Christ as the hope and life of his soul. He soon resolved to devote himself to the work of the gospel ministry; completed his academical education, and studied theology, while he went on with his school; and was, in due time, licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, as above stated. Mr. Robinson was remarkable for the native vigour of his mind, and still more for the fervour of his piety. Wherever he went, it pleased God to grant him some precious fruits of his ministry. Few names in the American Church rank higher than his on the scale of usefulness. He died at St. George's, in Delaware, in the month of April, 1746.

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frontier settlements, in the course of his mission, entered Virginia, and preached with considerable success in some of the more remote counties of the colony. While he was thus employed, some young people from the neighbourhood of Mr. Morris, and the children of his friends, being on a visit to that part of the country, heard him preach, and recognizing in his sermons the same doctrines which they had been accustomed to hear at the Reading-House, they communicated the intelligence to their parents in Hanover, who immediately despatched two men to Cub creek, where he had been heard by their children, in search of Mr. Robinson. He had left the place, however, before the arrival of the messengers, and they were obliged to follow him a hundred miles on his journey. They at length found him, and prevailed on him to appoint a time for visiting Hanover.

At the appointed time Mr. Robinson came. He had been obliged to ride the whole of the preceding night, in order to avoid disappointing the people. When he arrived at the Reading-House, they were assembled in crowds, waiting for the preacher. On his appearance, a scene ensued which marked at once the conscientiousness and simplicity of the parties on both sides. Mr. Morris and his friends, though they had heard a high character of Mr. Robinson from their children and others, thought proper to be more certain as to his testimonials and his creed, before they suffered him to address the congregation which had assembled. They therefore took him aside while the people waited, and not only requested to see his testimonials, which were ample, but also proceeded to examine him as to his views of the leading doctrines of the gospel. To this Mr. Robinson submitted, not only

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with meekness, but with affection; and having entirely satisfied his examiners, he went into the house and began to address the people. Mr. Morris himself, in a letter to President Davies, thus describes the scene which ensued:

"On the 6th of July, 1743, Mr. Robinson preached his first sermon to us, from Luke xiii. 3, and continued with us, preaching four days successively. The congregation was large the first day, and vastly increased the three following. It it is hard for the liveliest imagination to form an image of the condition of the assembly on these glorious days of the Son of man. Such of us as had been hungering for the word before, were lost in an agreeable surprise and astonishment, and some could not refrain from publicly declaring their transport. We were overwhelmed with the thoughts of the unexpected goodness of God in allowing us to hear the gospel preached in a manner that surpassed our hopes. Many that came through curiosity, were pricked to the heart; and but few in the numerous assemblies on these four days appeared unaffected. They returned alarmed with apprehensions of their dangerous condition, convinced of their former entire ignorance of religion, and anxiously inquiring what they should do to be saved. And there is reason to believe there was as much good done by these four sermons as by all the sermons preached in these parts before or since."*

These pious people, after formally taking the name to themselves in the presence of the court,

* See Mr. Davies's letter to Mr. Bellamy, of Bethlem, in New England, dated June 28, 1751, and preserved in Gillies' Historical Collections, vol. ii. p. 330.

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steadily called themselves Lutherans. When Mr. Robinson visited them, they inquired of him to what denomination he belonged. On his informing them that he was a Presbyterian, and laying before them the import and reasons of this denomination, they agreed to adopt it. They accordingly took the earliest opportunity of connecting themselves with the Presbytery of New Castle, which was the nearest body of that kind to the place of their residence, and ever afterwards called themselves Presbyterians.

What took place subsequently to the short visit of Mr. Robinson, at Hanover, will appear from the following continued account by Mr. Morris, in the same letter from which the former quotation was made: "Before Mr. Robinson left us, he successfully endeavoured to correct some of our mistakes, and to bring us to carry on the worship of God more regularly at our meetings. After this we met to read good sermons, and began and concluded with prayer and singing of psalms, which, till then, we had omitted. The blessing of God remarkably attended these more private means; and it was really astonishing to observe the solemn impressions begun or contiued in many, by hearing good discourses read. I had repeated invitations to come to many places round, some of them thirty or forty miles distant, to read. Considerable numbers attended with eager attention and awful solemnity; and several were, in a judgment of charity, turned to God, and thereupon erected meeting-houses, and chose readers among themselves, by which the work was more extensively carried on. Soon after Mr. Robinson left us, the Rev. Mr. John Blair paid us a visit; and truly he came to us in the fulness of the gospel of Christ.

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Former impressions were ripened, and new ones made on many hearts. One night in particular, a whole house-full of people was quite overcome with the power of the word, particularly of one pungent sentence, and they could hardly sit or stand, or keep their passions under any proper restraint. So general was the concern, during his stay with us, and so ignorant were we of the danger of apostasy, that we pleased ourselves with the thoughts of more being brought to Christ at that time, than now appear to have been, though there is still the greatest reason to hope that several bound themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

"Some time after this, the Rev. Mr. Rowan was sent us, by the Presbytery of Newcastle. He continued with us longer than any of the former, and the happy effects of his ministrations are still apparent. He was instrumental in beginning and promoting the religious concern in several places where there was little appearance of it before. This, together with his speaking pretty freely about the degeneracy of the clergy in this colony, gave a general alarm, and some measures were concerted to suppress us. To incense the indignation of the government the more, a perfidious wretch deponed he heard Mr. Rowan utter blasphemous expressions in his sermon. An indictment was thereupon drawn up against Mr. Rowan, (though by that time he had departed the colony,) and some who had invited him to preach at their houses were cited to appear before the general court, and two of them were fined. While my cause was upon trial, I had reason to rejoice that the throne of grace is accessible in all places, and that helpless creatures can send up their desires

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unseen, in the midst of a crowd. Six witnesses were cited to prove the indictment against Mr. Rowan, but their depositions were in his favour; and the witness who accused him of blasphemy, when he heard of the arrival of Messrs. Tennent and Finley, fled, and has not returned since; so that the indictment was dropped. But I had reason to fear being banished the colony, and all circumstances seemed to threaten the extirpation of religion among the dissenters in these parts. In these difficulties, having no person of a public character to appear in our favour, we were determined to acquaint the Synod of New York with our case. Accordingly four of us went to the Synod, May, 1745, when the Lord favoured us with success. The Synod drew up an address to our governor, the honourable Sir William Gooch, and sent it with Messrs. Tennent and Finley, who were received by the governor with respect, and had liberty granted them to preach among us. By this means the dreadful cloud was scattered for a while, and our languid hopes revived. They continued with us about a week, and though the deluge of passion in which we were at first overwhelmed, was by this time somewhat abated, yet much good was done by their ministry. The people of God were refreshed, and several careless sinners were awakened. Some that had trusted before in their moral conduct, and religious duties, were convinced of the depravity of their nature, and the necessity of regeneration; though indeed there were but few unregenerate persons among us at that time, that could claim so regular a character; the most part indulging themselves in criminal liberties, and being remiss in the duties of religion, which, alas! is too commonly the case still, in

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such parts of the colony as the late revival did not extend to. After they left us, we continued vacant for a considerable time, and kept up our meetings for reading and prayer, in several places, and the Lord favoured us with his presence. I was again repeatedly presented and fined in court, for absenting myself from church, and keeping up unlawful meetings, as they were called; 'but the bush flourished in the flames.' The next that were appointed to supply us, were the Rev. Messrs. William Tennent and Samuel Blair. They administered the Lord's supper among us; and we have reason ever to remember it as a most glorious day of the Son of man. The assembly was large, and the novelty of the manner of the administration did peculiarly engage their attention. It appeared as one of the days of heaven to some of us; and we could hardly help wishing we could, with Joshua, have delayed the revolutions of the heavens to prolong it. After Messrs. Tennent and Blair were gone, Mr. Whitefield came and preached four or five days, which was the happy means of giving us further encouragement, and engaging others to the Lord, especially among the church-people, who received the gospel more readily from him than from ministers of the Presbyterian denomination. After his departure, we were destitute of a minister, and followed our usual method of reading and prayer at our meetings, till the Rev. Mr. Davies, our present pastor, was sent us by the Presbytery, to supply us a few weeks in the spring, 1747, when our discouragements from the government were renewed and multiplied; for, upon a Lord's-day, a proclamation was set up at our meeting-house, strictly requiring all magistrates to suppress and prohibit, as far as they lawfully

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could, all itinerant preachers, &c., which occasioned us to forbear reading that day, till we had time to deliberate and consult what was expedient to do; but how joyfully were we surprised, before the next Sabbath, when we unexpectedly heard that Mr. Davies was come to preach so long among us, and especially that he had qualified himself according to law, and obtained the licensing of four meeting-houses among us, which had never been done before. Thus man's extremity is the Lord's opportunity. For this seasonable interposition of Divine Providence, we desire to offer our grateful praises, and we importune the friends of Zion to concur with us."

Such was the situation in which Mr. Rodgers and his companion found the Presbyterians of Hanover, and the adjoining counties, when they reached Virginia. They preached one Sabbath at Hanover, in a licensed house, and then pursued their journey to Williamsburg, to present themselves before the general court, for the purpose of taking the necessary qualifications, and obtaining license to preach, agreeably to the act of toleration. The general court, it seems, had taken the power of granting licenses in such cases, out of the hands of the county courts, to which it had been committed by the Act, and claimed it exclusively as their prerogative. This unlawful assumption of the general court, was chiefly owing to the anxiety of the established clergy, who had become very uneasy at the growing extension and influence of Presbyterianism; and feared an undue facility and readiness in the county courts, in complying with the solicitations of applicants.

Sir William Gooch was now lieutenant-governor of Virginia. He was a man of mild and amiable

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character, and strongly opposed to the persecution of dissenters. He received Mr. Davies and Mr. Rodgers with great politeness, and introduced them to the court. The application of the former, to be allowed to complete his qualifications as a resident preacher, was first received and considered. But when a similar application was made on behalf of Mr. Rodgers, difficulties were started, and much opposition manifested. Mr. Rodgers produced his testimonials from the Presbytery, &c., and requested that they might be read; but this was opposed. Sir William Gooch repeatedly ordered the clerk of the court to take them from Mr. Rodgers, who stood holding them in his hand, and to read them; but more than one of the members of the court pointedly objected to his proceeding; alleging that it was their right to sit in council on the subject, before any further step was taken; and that they demanded the exercise of the privilege on the present occasion. Sir William then bowing to Mr. Davies and Mr. Rodgers, said, "Gentlemen, you shall hear from us in a day or two." They immediately withdrew to their lodgings, deeply affected with their situation; shut themselves up in their chamber; and poured out their hearts to God in fervent prayer.

In the afternoon of the next day, Sir William Gooch sent for them, requesting to see them at his house, to which they immediately repaired. There they found Sir William, together with three other members of the court, who were friendly to their views. On being seated, Sir William addressed himself to Mr. Davies in the following terms: "Sir, it has been with the greatest difficulty that we have been able to prevent the court from revoking your license, and sending you out

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of the colony. This, however, we have been happy enough to prevent." Then turning to Mr. Rodgers, he said, "I am extremely sorry to inform you, sir, that the gentlemen of the court will by no means consent to your qualifying, as the law directs, for preaching in the colony." Mr. Rodgers thanked Sir William for his friendship; but added, that he was not asking a favour, but pleading a right; and therefore could not help considering himself as injured by its refusal. Sir William acknowledged the justice of this remark, and again expressed his regret at the course things had taken.

In the evening of the same day, the gentlemen received a very polite note from the lieutenant-governor, advising them to present a memorial to the court on the subject of their application; at the same time informing them, that, from considerations of prudence, he determined to absent himself from the court on the following day, when he took for granted their memorial would be presented, if at all. Upon this suggestion they prepared a respectful but spirited memorial, which they signed, and presented the next day to the court. When it was read, the oldest member of the court, who filled the chair in the absence of the lieutenant-governor, put an end to further discussion, by declaring publicly and with warmth, "We *have* Mr. Rodgers out, and we are determined to *keep* him out."

This extraordinary proceeding is susceptible of the following explanation. When Mr. Davies first went to Virginia, the established clergy felt but little anxiety about the influence of Presbyterianism, considering it as too small and feeble a cause to excite apprehension. But when the labours of

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Mr. Davies appeared evidently to be gaining an unexpected influence; when they found that Mr. Rodgers was an animated and popular preacher, exceedingly likely to make an impression; and that other Presbyterian ministers were settling and labouring with success in several adjacent parts of the country, they became alarmed, and resolved, at all events, to arrest the progress of what they deemed a threatening evil. Under these impressions, they would have refused to allow Mr. Davies to proceed in completing his qualifications, had they not given to him by the transactions of the preceding year, a pledge of his admission, which it was not easy either to explain away or to recall. They considered it, therefore, as the less evil of the two, to admit him; but having given to Mr. Rodgers no such pledge, and his circumstances being considerably different from those of Mr. Davies, they determined to exclude him from the dominion. He was accordingly forbidden, in the most peremptory manner, to preach within the colony, under the penalty of a fine of £500, and a year's imprisonment, without bail or mainprize.*

* The ground taken by the government of Virginia against dissenters, at this period, was not always the same. Sometimes there was a disposition in the courts to treat them according to the rigour of the Act of Uniformity. They contended that the Act of Toleration was never intended for the colonies. In the general court, where this doctrine was for a time maintained with great confidence by the king's attorney, Mr. Davies, on a certain occasion, defended his own cause, by special permission, and, in a very luminous and eloquent speech, proved, that the Act of Toleration having been intended to mitigate and qualify the Act of Uniformity, must, upon every just principle, be considered as extending as far as the original law; and observed, that if it were decided that the Act of

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Sir William Gooch, the lieutenant governor, paid particular attention to Mr. Davies and Mr. Rodgers, and invited them to his house repeatedly.* There they met with three members of the general court, Mr. Blair, the son of the venerable commissary,† Dr. Dick, and another gentleman,

Toleration did not extend to the colonies, it would follow that the Act of Uniformity did not. This occurrence seems to have taken place soon after the exclusion of Mr. Rodgers. The decisions of the courts, however, continued to be fluctuating, until Mr. Davies returned from England, with the opinion in writing of Sir Dudley Rider, the attorney-general, which was favourable to dissenters. This was produced to the general court in the case of an application being made to have some place licensed for dissenting worship. After this, no legal obstructions were thrown in the way of Presbyterians, except such as exist in England.

* Soon after Mr. Rodgers reached Williamsburg, one of the established clergy of Hanover, who had followed him, appeared before Sir William Gooch, and complained that this young gentleman, before going to Williamsburg, had preached one sermon, in Hanover, contrary to law, urging Sir William to proceed against him with rigour. Sir William's reply did equal honour to his religious sentiments and his official liberality. "Mr. ——, I am surprised at you! You profess to be a minister of Jesus Christ, and you come to me to complain of a man, and wish me to punish him, for preaching the gospel! For shame, sir! Go home and mind your own duty! For such a piece of conduct, you deserve to have your gown stript over your shoulders."

† The Rev. James Blair was born and educated in Scotland, where he obtained a benefice in the Episcopal church. On account of the unsettled state of religion in that kingdom, he quitted his preferment, and went into England, near the end of the reign of Charles II. The Bishop of London considering him as well qualified for the office, both with respect to talents and piety, prevailed on him to go to Virginia as a missionary, where he was highly popu-

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all of whom regretted the manner in which Mr. Rodgers had been treated, and were desirous of procuring a reconsideration of his case, and, if possible, redress. But, after much deliberation, it was judged inexpedient to attempt any thing further at that time.

Being thus cruelly and illegally expelled, in his ecclesiastical character, from Virginia, Mr. Rodgers determined, without delay, to quit the dominion. He lamented, however, afterwards, that he had not appealed to the King, in council, as such a measure would not only, in all probability, have secured redress in his own case, but also have done good in subsequent cases of a similar kind. The celebrated Dr. Doddridge, of Great Britain, also expressed his regret that such a step had not been

lar, and extensively useful. In 1689, he obtained the appointment of ecclesiastical commissary for the colony. Mr. Blair solicited a charter and donations for William and Mary College, and was the principal agent in founding that institution. He was named in the charter as the first President of the College, and acted in that capacity, with fidelity and acceptance, until the year 1742. In 1743, he died, in Virginia, at a good old age, universally lamented. He was a learned, pious, and exemplary man, and filled the various stations to which he was called with honour and usefulness. This gentleman published four volumes of discourses under the following title: "Our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount explained, and recommended, in divers Sermons and Discourses." London, 8vo. 1742. This work is spoken of with high approbation by Dr. Doddridge, in his Family Expositor. Mr. Blair treated Mr. Whitefield, when he visited Virginia, with much respect and friendliness, invited him to preach, and encouraged his evangelical labours. His laudable exertions in favour of religion and literature are mentioned with pointed respect by Bishop Burnet, in his History of his own times. See vol. iv. p. 174.

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taken. He wished for an opportunity of seeing the pious and promising young American, who had been thus treated; and who, by appealing, would have been led to make a voyage to the mother country; and he believed that a favourable decision obtained, in the last resort, in such a case, would have been extensively useful.

Mr. Rodgers, quitting the Western Shore of Virginia, crossed the bay, and came up the peninsula, to Somerset county, in Maryland, where he spent the summer of 1748—a summer of which he was accustomed often to speak as one of the most pleasant and useful of his life. The easy and elegant hospitality of the inhabitants of Maryland, has been long and justly celebrated. When this characteristic disposition is sanctified by religion, and has, for its more immediate objects, the eminently pious, and especially zealous and exemplary ministers of the gospel, those who have had the opportunity have observed it to be displayed with peculiar assiduity and attraction. Our promising young herald of the cross was received with open arms by the polished and hospitable inhabitants of Somerset county. His genteel and dignified manners were peculiarly acceptable to them; and the zeal, the piety, and the various respectable qualities of his preaching, rendered him highly popular.

In this county he made the house of Captain Venable, at the head of Wicomico river, more particularly his home. But the friendly attentions of those to whom he was introduced, as well as an unremitting ardour in preaching the gospel, whereever he had an opportunity, drew him in every direction through that district of country. His ministrations, in the course of this summer, were,

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in a very uncommon degree, blessed, to the conviction and conversion of sinners, and to the edification of the pious. He often expressed a conviction that he had been made the means of doing more good during that short period of three or four months, than in any equal period of his life afterwards. The triumphs of the gospel were numerous and signal. In several cases, indeed, they were so remarkable as to be abundantly worthy of being recorded, did not the limits prescribed to this memoir forbid our descending to such minuteness of detail. A single case shall serve as a specimen.

About a mile below Captain Venable's, on the Wicomico, lived Mr. Winder, a gentleman of great wealth and urbanity, a polite scholar, and a member of the Episcopal church. Notwithstanding his religious connexion, however, he called, with much civility, at the house of his neighbour, to see the young Presbyterian preacher, and invited him to pay him a visit. Mr. Rodgers accepted the invitation, and went accordingly. He was apprised by the members of Captain Venable's family, who accompanied him, that Mr. Winder was a zealous, high-toned Episcopalian, and, particulaly, that he was a very determined and ardent opponent of the doctrine of election. He thanked his informants for this hint, and promised to be on his guard against any unnecessary collision with his respectable host on the topics on which they differed. Mr. Rodgers, however, was scarcely seated in his house, before Mr. Winder himself introduced the controversy respecting election, by asking his opinion of a book on that subject, which was lying open on a table in the parlour, and which had

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been, probably, placed there by design. Our young preacher replied that he had never before seen the book referred to, but that he was a very firm believer in the doctrine of election, and could not help regarding it as a very important and precious part of the Christian system. This plunged them at once into the midst of the dispute; which was continued with a few interruptions, during the rest of the day. Mr. Rodgers plied his opponent with the usual arguments, drawn from the perfections of God; from the inseparable connexion of predetermination with foreknowledge; from the consideration, that if all men be not saved, and if salvation be of God, there must be a choice—a selection from the whole number of the human family; from express and pointed declarations of Scripture on this subject; and from the utter impossibility of supposing prophecies to be either understandingly revealed, or certainly fulfilled, without admitting, at the same time, the doctrine of predestination. To all these, he added an appeal to the articles of Mr. Winder's own church, in which the doctrine of election, precisely as held by Calvinists, is most clearly and strongly laid down. Mr. Rodgers acknowledged that there were difficulties attending this doctrine, which he did not presume to be able to solve; but warned Mr. Winder of the danger of opposing a doctrine which the pious and venerable fathers of his own church, with their collected wisdom, had pronounced to be full of "sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort, to godly persons;" though exceedingly liable, as they add, to be perverted by "curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ," and to become, to such persons, a means of most dangerous "down-

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fall ;"* and above all, warned him against the rejection of a doctrine which appeared to be so plainly and decisively laid down in many parts of the Scriptures of infallible truth.

Mr. Winder acknowledged himself silenced, but not convinced. He was evidently, however, less warm and positive toward the close of the visit, than when the dispute commenced; and dismissed his guest in the evening with much respect and friendliness.

The next Sabbath Mr. Rodgers preached in the neighbourhood. Mr. Winder was one of his hearers: and the faithful and animated discourse, founded on Ephesians ii. 8; "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"—was made the means of reaching his heart. He, in common with a number of others, was deeply affected in the course of

* See Article xvii.—The Calvinism of the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, has often been denied by modern Episcopalians, as suggested in a foregoing note. But there is one fact on the subject which the language of the 17th Article, as above quoted, renders incontrovertibly evident. It is this: that the compilers of the Article held, and meant to express, the doctrine of Predestination, in a form, which, though "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort, to godly persons," was yet not only mysterious, but also highly offensive to the natural feelings of men; in a form exceedingly liable, in their view, to perversion, and, when perverted, to become a source of danger to the over-curious speculatist. Now we may safely appeal to Arminians, and ask, whether these cautioning and qualifying clauses are at all applicable to their views of the doctrine of election; and whether their whole spirit and force do not refer to the Calvinistic view of the subject. Such cautions and qualifying suggestions are not to be found in Arminian writers; while, in Calvinistic writings, they are scarcely ever omitted.

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the service, and retired from the house of worship with very different views of himself, and of the way of salvation, from those with which he came thither, or had ever entertained before. The next day, he called on Mr. Rodgers; not to cavil at the doctrine of election; not to speculate on the mysteries of religion, as matters of curious investigation; but, as a convinced and humbled sinner, to ask, what he should do to be saved. His heart was now softened; his difficulties were in a great measure removed; he was convinced that if ever he were saved, it must be by grace alone; he was ready to acknowledge himself an instance of the sovereignty of divine grace; and, in a short time, found sweet peace and consolation in those truths which had, a few days before, appeared to him unscriptural and forbidding. Not long afterwards he united himself in communion with the Presbyterian Church; was for many years, not only a distinguished, exemplary, and useful member, but also a ruling elder of that Church in Somerset county; and often spoke of the revolution which his views and hopes had undergone, and of the circumstances attending it, with deep humility, and fervent thankfulness.

Early in the autumn of the year 1748, Mr. Rodgers took leave of Maryland, and returned to Pennsylvania. When he attended his Presbytery, in the month of October, he found four calls for him, ready to be laid before that body. One, of the most affectionate and pressing kind, from Somerset county, in Maryland, which he had recently left: one from Canococheague, and another from Pequea, both in Pennsylvania; and the fourth from St. George's, a small village, in the county of Newcastle, in Delaware. Of these

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several calls, that from Somerset county, was, in every respect, most agreeable to his own views and wishes. There he had been more useful than in any other part of the church; and there he had received such testimonies of respect and attachment as made a deep and lasting impression on his mind. Had he been left to follow his own inclination, he would, undoubtedly, without a moment's hesitation, have accepted this call. But it was ordered otherwise. Though the congregation of St. George's was the smallest and feeblest of the whole number that solicited his pastoral labours; and though a settlement among them was less promising, on the score of temporal provision and comfort, than in any of the other places in his offer; yet his brethren in the ministry, and other pious friends, believing that the prosperity, if not the continued existence of this congregation, depended under God, on their speedily obtaining a popular preacher, urged him so much to accept their call, that he thought it his duty to do so; and accordingly declared his acceptance of it, at the same meeting of Presbytery at which it was presented.

CHAPTER III.

From his settlement in St. George's, until his removal to New York.

Mr. Rodgers was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed pastor of the church of St. George's, by the Presbytery of Newcas-

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tle, on the 16th day of March, in the year 1749. Solemnities of this kind, when even tolerably conducted, are always highly interesting to the pious mind; but, on this occasion, they were peculiarly so. The ardent piety of the candidate; his youth, his great popularity, the striking testimonies of attachment which he received from the people of his charge, and the venerable character of several of the ministers who took part in the transaction,* all conspired to render the scene uncommonly impressive and gratifying. The Rev. Mr. Blair, the preceptor and friend of Mr. Rodgers, presided in the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. The sermon, usual on such occasions, was preached by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Finley,† and was after-

* Among the members of the Presbytery who were present on this occasion, besides Mr. Blair and Dr. Finley, there were the Rev. Messrs. John Blair, Samuel Davies, Charles Tennent, and Alexander Hutchinson, all eminent in their day.

† The Rev. Samuel Finley, D. D., was born in Ireland. He left his native country at the age of eighteen, and arrived at Philadelphia on the 28th day of September, 1734. With a fixed view to the gospel ministry, he had made considerable progress in his classical studies before he left Ireland. After his arrival in America, he spent several years in prosecuting his academical and theological studies. In August, 1740, he was licensed to preach; and on the 13th day of October following, he was ordained to the work of the ministry, by the Presbytery of New Brunswick. After his ordination, he spent several years in itinerant preaching, in which he was more than usually zealous and successful. In June, 1644, he accepted a call to the pastoral charge of the church of West Nottingham, in Cecil county, in Maryland, where he continued to reside near seventeen years. Here he established an academy, which acquired and maintained a high reputation. In this institution, the Rev. Dr. Macwhorter, Dr. Rush, Governor Henry, of Maryland, Colonel John

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wards printed, at the request of the congregation.

Our young pastor, after his ordination, immediately entered, with ardour and diligence, on the duties of his office. In preaching; in visiting his people; in catechizing the children, and those of riper years; and in all the multiplied and arduous labours of a faithful minister of Christ, who watched for souls, he abounded. Nor did he labour in vain. The congregation rapidly increased; a number of hopeful converts were in a short time added to the church; the place of worship soon became too small to accommodate the people, and was enlarged; but not long afterwards, it was still found insufficient to contain the numbers who crowded to public worship, and was again enlarged; while the growing respect and attachment of his people, and the increasing confidence and esteem of his fathers and brethren in the ministry, were pledges at once, of his rising reputation, and of his extending usefulness.

Soon after his settlement at St. George's he renewed, in a solemn written form, his self-dedica-

Bayard, and a number of other eminently useful characters, received their education. Upon the death of President Davies, in 1761, Dr. Finley was chosen his successor, and removed to Princeton in the month of July, of that year. He died in Philadelphia, whither he had gone for medical advice, on the 17th day of July, 1766, in the 51st year of his age. Dr. Finley was a man of sound and vigorous mind, of extensive learning, and of unusually fervent piety. He had the ministry in view from the sixth year of his age, and always adorned the sacred office. Seldom has a life been more exemplary or more useful; and seldom, very seldom, has a death been more joyful and triumphant than his.

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tion to God. When his private papers were examined after his death, a document of this nature was found among them, bearing date a short time after his ordination. It is drawn up on what may be supposed to be the usual plan of such instruments; and is in no respect remarkable, excepting for the humility and the devout fervour of its style. From the same source it is ascertained, that he made a formal written renewal of this dedication at least *thirty-one* times, after the first that appears on record;* the last being about three years before his death. All these papers appear to have been drawn up, and the transactions which they express to have taken place, on days of fasting and special prayer, seasons in which he abounded through the whole of his life. It was a common remark of an old divine, that prayer more than any thing else makes a good minister. It may be said, to the honour of the excellent minister, whose portrait we are now attempting to sketch, that there was no part of his character more conspicuous than his devotional spirit. It was habitual and uniform. It shone in private as well as in public. And while he often inculcated on his younger brethren in the ministry, the great importance to their comfort and usefulness, of maintaining their personal piety in a lively frame, he was himself one of the most eminent examples of what he recommended to others. Besides other seasons, both of ordinary and special devotion, he seldom failed to observe the anniversaries of his birth, of his licensure, and of his ordination,

* Several of the earlier of these written renewals of his covenant with God, are in the Latin language.

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as days of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer. And on these occasions, he was accustomed to commit to writing reflections and prayers, which were found among his papers after his decease, and which indicate piety of a very fervent and elevated character.

Besides his congregation in the village of St. George's, which was his original and principal charge, Mr. Rodgers also had under his care a small congregation near the village of Middletown, in Delaware, and generally called the "Forest congregation."* To the latter he devoted one third part of his stated labour; which, though not attended with such remarkable and extensive benefit as in St. George's, was yet by no means without success.

It is interesting to observe how often and how remarkably the labours of one servant of Christ are connected with the history and character of another; thus evincing that every occurrence, however apparently trivial, is a part of the great system of providential arrangement, and is not without its importance. The first time, after entering on his pastoral charge, that Mr. Rodgers assembled the children of a particular district in his congregation, to catechize them, it was at the house of Mr. Hugh Macwhorter, a wealthy and respectable planter in his neighbourhood. The children were so numerous, that a room of ordinary size would not contain them; and it was thought best to collect them in a spacious barn on the farm, and near the dwelling-house of Mr. Macwhorter. Among the children catechized on this occasion, was a son of that gentleman, afterwards the Reverend Dr. Alexander

* The Forest congregation is now nearly extinct.

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Macwhorter, of Newark, in New Jersey.* He was seven years younger than Mr. Rodgers, and at the primary visitation of his youthful pastor, presented himself as a subject of ecclesiastical inspection and instruction. The prudence, the good sense, the readiness in reply, and the highly promising character which this youth exhibited, first drew the attention, and afterwards the special regard and friendship of Mr. Rodgers; and laid the foundation of an affectionate union between them to the end of life. On the one hand Mr. Rodgers noticed, encouraged, and directed young Macwhorter: and on the other, Mr. Macwhorter soon gratified his friend and pastor by exhibiting those pledges of future eminence and usefulness which were afterwards so honourably redeemed. They were destined to reside near each other, and to act together, in many of the most important affairs of the church, for more than forty years.

Those who are acquainted with the history of American ecclesiastical affairs, know that the Presbyterian church, at the time when Mr. Rodgers

* The Rev. Alexander Macwhorter, D. D., was born in the county of Newcastle, in the state of Delaware, July 26, 1734. He was graduated at the college of New Jersey, in the year 1757; studied theology at Freehold, under the direction of the Rev. William Tennent; was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed pastor of the church in Newark, New Jersey, in 1759; and died in that town, July 20, 1807, in the seventy-third year of his age. Dr. Macwhorter was one of the most able, learned, venerable, and useful ministers in the American church. His pious labours; his public spirit; his activity in all the great movements in the religious denomination to which he belonged; and the universal confidence which he commanded, will transmit his name to posterity with high

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took his station as one of her ministers, was divided into two great parties. A very brief account of the causes and influence of this division, will not only, it is presumed, gratify curiosity, but will also throw light on some events which properly belong to this memoir.

From the origin of the Presbyterian church, as an organized body, in this country, the materials of which it was composed, and especially its clerical materials, were, in a considerable degree, heterogeneous. The principal constituent parts were, strict Presbyterians, from Scotland and Ireland; and Congregationalists, from South-Britain, and New-England. The former were desirous of establishing the system of Presbyterianism to which they had been accustomed in all its extent and purity; the latter, were willing to bear the name, but wished for many abatements and modifications of that system. The Congregationalists, and those who sided with them,* appear to have been, generally, more ardent in their piety than the strict Presbyterians. However this might be, it is undoubtedly a fact, that they urged in the judicatories of the church, with peculiar zeal, their wishes, that great care should be taken respecting the personal piety of candidates for the holy ministry; and that a close examination on experimental religion should always make a part of trials for licensure and ordination. The strict Presbyterians, on the one hand, were zealous for the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Directory, Presbyterial order, and Academical learning in the preachers of the

* A few of the Scotch and Irish and their descendants, took this side from the first, and more after a while; particularly the Blairs, the Tennents, Dr. Finley, &c.

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gospel; while they appear to have disliked the close examination contended for in regard to personal piety; or, at least to have disapproved the method in which the examination was conducted, as being different from any thing to which they had been accustomed. On the other hand, the Congregationalists, provided they were satisfied on the score of personal piety, did not set so high a value on human learning, or require so much of it as indispensable, in candidates for the ministry, as their opponents contended for; but were too ready to make abatements and to give dispensations as to this point, in violation of the rules of Presbyteries and Synods.

As the leading objects to which these parties were severally attached, were reasonable and proper in themselves, so each had influence enough to procure the adoption of its favourite measure by the Synod.* In 1729, in consequence of an overture drawn up, and prosecuted with great zeal, the year before, by the Rev. John Thompson, of Lewistown, in Delaware, the Synod passed what was called "The Adopting Act." This Act consisted of a public authoritative adoption of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, &c., as the Confession of Faith of the church; and made it necessary, that not only every candidate, but also every actual minister in the church, should be obliged, by subscription or otherwise, *coram Presbyterio*, to acknowledge these instruments respec-

* The first Synod of the Presbyterian Church in America, was formed in 1716, and was called the Synod of Philadelphia. It consisted of four Presbyteries, viz.: the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the Presbytery of Newcastle, the Presbytery of Snow Hill, and the Presbytery of Long Island.

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tively, as the confession of their faith. This Act, though it did not pass without much opposition,* appears to have been adopted by a large majority, and was, at length, peaceably acquiesced in by all.

In 1734, an overture was brought into Synod, concerning the trials of candidates for the ministry; directing that "all candidates for the ministry be examined diligently as to their experience of a work of sanctifying grace on their hearts, and that none be admitted who are not, in a judgment of charity, serious Christians." This overture was adopted unanimously, but became a source of great uneasiness within a few years afterwards.

These two Acts embraced the favourite objects of each party; but the manner of executing them gave rise to the principal difficulty. In the several Presbyteries, according as the one party or the other was a majority, they practised pretty much agreeably to their own views; and this was the source of much contention and debate when the parties met in Synod: each charging the other, and commonly with justice, for some violation in the several Presbyteries, of the orders of Synod.

In 1738, the Synod passed an Act directing "that young men be first examined respecting their literature, by a commission of Synod, and obtain a testimony of their approbation before they can be taken on trial by any Presbytery." The Presbytery of New Brunswick first met on the 8th of August, in this year; and immediately, for several weighty and sufficient reasons," took Mr. John

* It was particularly opposed by those members of the Synod who had come from England, Wales, and the New England Colonies. Mr. Dickinson of Elizabethtown, took the lead in this opposition, and appeared as a writer on the subject. He was answered by Mr. Thompson.

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Rowland on trials, contrary to the above Act, and proceeded to license him in September following. Two vacant congregations in New Jersey, under the care of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, which had given them leave to invite any regular candidate to preach for them, requested Mr. Rowland's services, who, having obtained the consent of his own Presbytery, preached for them one Sabbath. The Presbytery of Philadelphia immediately met, *pro re nata*, and unanimously declared that "they could not accept of Mr. Rowland as an orderly licensed preacher, nor approve of his preaching in any of the vacancies within their bounds."

In 1739, the Synod declared that Mr. Rowland could not be allowed as a regular candidate. Notwithstanding this, however, Mr. William Tennent, the elder, introduced him into his pulpit; and when some of his congregation complained of this act to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, Mr. Tennent justified his conduct; disclaimed the authority of Presbytery in the case, and "contemptuously withdrew." The Presbytery censured his conduct as "irregular and disorderly." This took place in September, 1739. In the month of October following, the Presbytery of New Brunswick ordained Mr. Rowland; and he continued a member of that Presbytery until the month of November, 1742, when he was dismissed to join the Presbytery of Newcastle. Every thing of this kind served, of course, to exasperate feelings previously excited, and to lay a train of combustible materials, ready to be kindled into a flame whenever an occasion occurred.

While things were in this state, Mr. Whitefield, in 1739, paid his second visit to America. The extensive and glorious revival of religion, which

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took place under his ministry, and that of his clerical advocates and adherents, is well known. The friends of this revival generally coincided with that portion of the Presbyterian church, which was most friendly to ardent piety, and least zealous for strict presbyterial order, and literary qualifications in the ministry; while the strict Presbyterian party, perceiving some really censurable irregularities in the active friends and promoters of the revival, were too ready to pronounce the whole a delusion.* This brought on the crisis. Animosities which had long been burning in secret, now burst into flame. The Old Side, (as

* A diversity of sentiment, concerning the character and ministrations of Mr. Whitefield, arose, about the same time in the Congregational churches of the Eastern colonies. Such men as Dr. Colman, Mr. Foxcroft, Dr. Sewall, Mr. Prince, Mr. Edwards, and a number more, who were the glory of New England, though they reprobated and opposed certain extravagancies which they witnessed, thought it their duty to express "their full persuasion, that there had been a happy and remarkable revival of religion, in many parts of the land, through an uncommon divine influence;" while Dr. Chauncey, and some others of more orthodox character, were so deeply impressed with the circumstances of disorder which attended the revival, that they condemned the whole work, as mere wild-fire and enthusiasm, and made the most determined opposition to Mr. Whitefield and his adherents. President Clap, though a Calvinist, and a friend to vital religion, also imbibed a strong prejudice against the labours of Whitefield, and took the side of opposition. The Legislature of Connecticut passed a law, about this time, prohibiting itinerant preachers from entering parishes in which a minister was settled, unless by his consent. For violating this law, by preaching to a congregation in New Haven, the Rev. Doctor Finley, afterwards President Finley, was arrested by the civil authority, and carried, as a vagrant, out of the colony.

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the strict Presbyterians were called,) regarded the New Side, or New Lights, (as the others were denominated,) as a set of extravagant and ignorant enthusiasts: while the New Lights considered the men of the Old Side, as a set of pharisaical formalists. Undue warmth of feeling and speech, and improper inferences, were admitted on both sides. One act of violence led to another; until, at length, in 1741, the highest judicatory of the church was rent in twain; and the Synod of New York was set up in a sort of opposition to that of Philadelphia. Among the most active and conspicuous members of the former were, the Tennents, the Blairs, Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Pierson of Woodbridge, Dr. Finley, and Mr. Burr. Among the leaders of the latter, were Messrs. John and Samuel Thompson, Dr. Francis Allison, Mr. Robert Cross, and several others.*

In fomenting this division, there is some reason to believe, that rivalship between different literary institutions, patronised by the parties respectively, was not without its influence. This rivalship certainly rose very high after the separation, and did not wholly disappear for a considerable time after the re-union. All the original patrons of New Jersey College belonged to the New Side; while their opponents declared in favour of the celebrat-

* It ought to be noticed, that some excellent and judicious ministers, believing both sides to be in the wrong, could not fully agree with either. These took no part in the controversy, as such; were sometimes claimed by both parties; and took that standing in Presbytery and Synod which was most convenient from local circumstances. And even some of those who were ranked by themselves, as well as by others, with one or the other of the parties respectively, disapproved of much that they saw in both.

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ed academies of New London and Newark, under the direction of Dr. Allison, and Mr. McDowell, and the College and Academy of Philadelphia.

In this controversy there were undoubtedly, faults on both sides. This, indeed, some of the most zealous actors in the scene were candid enough to acknowledge, after union was restored; and severely censured themselves. The Old Side were wrong in opposing the revival of religion under the ministry of Whitefield and his friends; and in contending against examinations on personal piety; while the New Side were wrong in violating Presbyterial order; in undervaluing literary qualifications for the holy ministry; and in giving countenance to some real extravagancies which attended the revival of religion.

These errors were afterwards seen and lamented. The parties gradually cooled. Both became sensible that they had acted rashly and uncharitably. Both felt the inconvenience, as well as the sin of division. Congregations were divided. Two places of worship, and two ministers, were established in places where there was not support for one. The members of one Synod were excluded from the pulpits of the other; and this was the case even when individuals cordially respected, and wished to invite each other to an interchange of ministerial services. Still, although both parties soon became heartily sick of the division, the Synods remained divided for seventeen years. The first overture towards a union appears to have been made by the Synod of New York, in the year 1749. But nine years were spent in negotiation. At length, mutual concessions were made; the articles of union in detail were agreed upon;

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and the Synods were happily united, under the title of "the Synod of New York and Philadelphia," in the year 1758.

In contemplating this controversy and division, at the present period, when the lapse of more than half a century has allayed the heat, and removed the prejudices, which then agitated and rent the church; although we see much to lament and to reprobate, we see also something to inspire thankfulness. The King of Zion brings good out of evil. One of these parties was undoubtedly made the means of preserving the vital piety, and the other, the learning and order of our church: blessings worth contending for, and seldom maintained without many struggles. May they increase, and be perpetual!

Mr. Rodgers was ordained in 1749, as before stated, when the division had existed for a number of years, and when the heat of separation had, in some degree, abated. He took his stand, with decision, on the New Side, in company with the Blairs, the Finleys, the Tennents, and others, his intimate friends. And although he never approved of violence, and never countenanced extravagance or disorder; though he cultivated sincere and affectionate friendship with individuals of the other party; and freely acknowledged the errors of some with whom he commonly acted; yet he maintained the character of a staunch New Side man, as long as the distinction lasted. He was of that part of the Presbytery of Newcastle, which met with, and was always considered as a constituent branch of, the Synod of New York. He rejoiced, however, in the union, which took place when he had been about nine years in the ministry; and

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was ever esteemed a lover, and, as far as possible, without a dereliction of principle, a promoter, of peace.

It will be seen that Mr. Rodgers entered on the pastoral office at a very early period of life. But though his age and his appearance were extremely youthful; yet the uncommon prudence and dignity of his manners in private intercourse; the devoted engagedness in the duties of his office, which he manifested from the first; the fervent piety of his discourses; and the animated, bold, and commanding style of his address in the pulpit, were above his years. It was long ago said, by an illustrious heathen, *Non potest in eo succus esse diuturnus, quod nimis celeriter, maturitatem est assecutus;** and by another, *Nullus est et diuturnus et præcox fructus:*† the spirit of both which maxims is conveyed in the English proverb, Soon ripe, soon rotten. This proverb was actually applied to Mr. Rodgers, soon after his settlement at St. George's, by a distinguished layman, who happened to hear one of the most judicious, elevated, and forcible specimens of his eloquence.—But happily the calculation was erroneous. His fruit did not early decay, neither did his leaf prematurely wither. For more than sixty years, after this prediction, he was destined to adorn and to bless the garden of God.

Of the general acceptance and usefulness of Mr. Rodgers's ministry at St. George's, the following letter, from the Rev. Mr. Latta, of Newcastle, will give a satisfactory view. It was originally communicated, indeed, by the writer, under the expectation that the materials which it furnished

* Cicero. † Curtius.

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would be exhibited in another form: but it is so judicious and comprehensive, that the reader will, no doubt, prefer seeing it without alteration.

"*Christiana Village*, 10th July, 1811.

"REV. AND DEAR BROTHER,

"Agreeably to your request, I have made inquiry of Mr. Vandegrift and others, in the congregation of St. George's, with a view to collect some materials for your proposed account of the life and character of your late excellent colleague, the Rev. Doctor Rodgers. In consequence of the great lapse of time since the doctor's settlement in that congregation, I have been able to collect but very few particulars. The following, though much less than I could wish, must be accepted as the result of my inquiries.

"Dr. Rodgers settled in the congregation of St. George's about the year 1748, and continued with them sixteen years. Antecedently to his settlement with them, a revival of religion had taken place in the congregation, through the instrumentality of the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Robinson, and the celebrated Whitefield. Mr. Robinson was their first pastor, and the immediate predecessor of Dr. Rodgers. This revival considerably increased during the doctor's pastoral labours. His audiences were generally crowded, solemn, and attentive. In consequence of the number attending public worship, it became necessary to make a considerable addition to their house of worship, and even after the building was enlarged, the aisles, the doors, and even the windows, were frequently filled with auditors. Such was the zealous, animated, and popular character of the Doctor's preaching, that he drew people of all denomina-

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tions to hear him; and, ultimately, his popularity, so far prevailed, that an Episcopal church which stood near the village of St. George's, was deserted; the congregation became extinct; and the site of their house of worship is now only known by the monuments of the dead. Several who were Episcopalians when the Doctor settled at St. George's, connected themselves with his church; and their descendants are Presbyterians, and belong to that church, to the present day. This excellent man preached, not only at St. George's, but also a part, perhaps one-third of his time, at what was called the Forest Church, near Middletown.

"Dr. Rodgers was an animated and fervent preacher. He seldom preached without weeping himself; and generally melted his audience into tears. But he was more than a good preacher; he was a zealous, vigilant, and faithful pastor. He regularly, besides holding annual district examinations on religious subjects, paid a pastoral visit, yearly, to every family in his congregation. On these occasions he called upon every member of the family to repeat a part of the Assembly's catechism; asked them a number of extempore questions on doctrinal and practical subjects in religion; prayed with them; and gave a warm and pathetic exhortation. Through a blessing, most probably upon these exercises, there was then at least the form of religion in almost every family. In them the morning and evening sacrifices of prayer were regularly offered. Every house, with very few exceptions, appeared to be a Bethel, a house of God. At the present time, in that vicinity, not one family, perhaps, in twenty, exhibits even the form of religion in their house. The Doctor was

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particular too, on all occasions, in administering private rebukes to the disorderly, and especially to the intemperate; and generally, even in his common visits of friendship or business, it was his custom to speak a word in season, which he hoped might prove a savour of life to those who heard it.

"In 1751, Dr. Rodgers circulated a subscription paper through his congregations, with a view to raising a permanent fund for their use. That it might accumulate, he would not, for several years receive the interest of this fund, though it was raised principally with a view that the stated pastor might enjoy the benefit of the annual proceeds. To this fund, humanly speaking, the congregation of St. George's now owe the stated preaching of the gospel among them; for without it they could not pay their proportion for the support of a pastor, for even a small part of his ministerial labours. Dr. Rodgers, therefore, though long since removed from them, and now dead, may be said to be preaching to that people; not only by his many pious, pathetic instructions; but also by laying up in store the means of supporting a preacher to break to them the bread of life. What a striking proof is this of the propriety, (and what an encouragement to those who are thus engaged,) of adopting and pursuing measures which are calculated to be permanently useful, and especially to the church! How pleasing the thought, that even after they are dead, and their bodies, which had been engaged in the important object, have mouldered into dust, the seed which they had sown will be bringing forth abundant fruit in the salvation of souls, and to the glory of God!

"So much was Dr. Rodgers respected and be-

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loved by the people of St. George's, that they parted with him with the utmost reluctance, and the deepest sorrow. Even after an application had been made to the Presbytery for the dissolution of the pastoral relation subsisting between him and them, a reference was made of the subject to the Synod, with a view to arrest the proceedings, and continue the relation. After the dissolution had taken place, and the day arrived for the Doctor to preach his farewell sermon, the moment he rose to the pulpit, a paroxysm of grief seized every heart, and the swollen tear stood in every eye. The impression was felt by every individual, that although they were about to hear him preach, he was no longer their pastor, and they should never more hear him as such; and they sorrowed most of all, because they should see his face as *their* preacher no more. The solemnity of the silence which generally prevailed during the preaching of this discourse, was only exceeded by the audible expressions of bitter lamentation, which now and then issued from every quarter of the church. Every head was bowed down with grief, and every heart bled with sorrow.

"After Dr. Rodgers left St. George's, the Rev. Mr. Spencer, a zealous and animated preacher, settled there, and continued four years. During his continuance, the congregation was nearly as large and prosperous as it was whilst Dr. Rodgers was their pastor. The first symptom of their decline was the departure of some of the people from the church before the afternoon service.*

* This is neither a new nor a solitary fact. Perhaps there is no symptom of decline in religion more common or more infallible. It may be safely asserted, that no individual, in whom the religious principle was strong and

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When Dr. Rodgers preached there, none of the people thought of withdrawing till the whole service of the day was concluded. In consequence of this disposition in the people, to leave the church between sermons, increasing, they have had generally, for a long time, but one sermon preached on the Sabbath.

"Upon Mr. Spencer's leaving the congregation of St. George's, it began rapidly to decline, and has ever since continued to decline, till within these two years, during which time it has somewhat revived, in consequence of enjoying a part of the stated ministerial labours of the Rev. Samuel Bell, who is a warm and animated preacher.

"Thus you have ascertained that Doctor Rodgers was much respected by the congregation of St. George's; that his labours were greatly blessed to them; and that by his removal from them they sustained a severe loss, and experienced a shock from which they have never yet recovered, and perhaps never will recover, till the general effusion of the Spirit take place, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

"Your very respectful and affectionate brother in the gospel, JOHN E. LATTA.

"Rev. Dr. *Samuel Miller*."

lively, ever habitually neglected a second service on the Lord's day, when it was in his power to attend upon it; and that church in which there is a prevailing negligence of the public worship of God on Sabbath afternoons, may, with confidence, be pronounced to be languid and declining in its spiritual condition. The excellent minister, whose memory we are endeavouring to honour, whenever he remarked a circumstance of this kind, as existing in any church, always lamented over it, as a symptom highly unfavourable and distressing in its indications.

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On the 19th day of September, 1752, between three and four years after his settlement at St. George's, Mr. Rodgers formed a matrimonial connexion with Miss Elizabeth Bayard, the eldest daughter of Colonel Peter Bayard, of Cecil county, in Maryland. In this alliance with that lady, and her family, which was one of the most respectable for piety, wealth, and influence, in that part of the then American colonies, he found much happiness. She was a woman of excellent understanding, of eminent piety and prudence, and proved truly a "help meet" for him. By her he had four children; two sons and two daughters. Of these, one son and one daughter died in infancy; the others yet survive.*

In the year 1753, the Rev. Messrs. Samuel Davies, of Virginia, and Gilbert Tennent, of Philadelphia, were appointed by the Synod of New York, at the request of the Trustees of New Jersey college, to visit Great Britain, for the purpose of soliciting donations for the support of that college. During their absence, of more than a year, on this mission, their respective pulpits were supplied by order of the Synod. Mr. Rodgers was sent, by that body, in the spring of 1754, to supply the pulpit of Mr. Davies. He remained in Virginia several months, preaching with great assiduity and acceptance. Recollecting the unpleasant treatment which he had received from the government of that colony, six years before, he was not without apprehensions of having some

* Dr. John R. B. Rodgers, an eminent physician of New York, and for a number of years one of the medical professors of Columbia College; and Mrs. Susannah Tennent, relict of the late Rev. Dr. William M. Tennent, of Abington, Pennsylvania.

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difficulty, of a troublesome, if not of an insurmountable kind, again thrown in his way. In this, however, he was agreeably disappointed. He was permitted to fulfil his mission without any serious molestation. There were, indeed, threats of prosecution thrown out from pretty respectable quarters, and in a tone of apparent determination, but they were never executed. Presbyterianism, by this time, had become better known, and more respected. Nor was there wanting an influence in its favour, in the person of the chief magistrate himself. The Governor's chair was then filled by Mr. Dinwiddie, a Scotch gentleman, who had been bred a Presbyterian, and who had married a sister of the Rev. Mr. McCulloch, the celebrated minister of the church of Cambuslang, in Scotland. By him Mr. Rodgers was treated with marked politeness, as he also was by several other persons of distinction in the colony. After a pleasant and profitable tour, he returned about the middle of the summer to St. George's.

Mr. Rodgers's character as a preacher and pastor was soon so extensively known, and so highly esteemed, that towards the close of the same year, (1754,) he received a very urgent and affectionate invitation from the church in New York, to pay it a visit, with a view to settlement. That church had become recently vacant, by the removal of Dr. Pemberton and Mr. Cumming, its collegiate pastors; and was in a state of unhappy disunion and ferment. Its leading members entertained a hope that the popularity of Mr. Rodgers might be the means of healing their divisions, and restoring comfort to their church. Considering that he had never, at that time, been in New York, and was, personally, an entire stranger to all the members

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of the church there, this invitation undoubtedly carried with it a high testimony of respect. But feeling himself happy with an affectionate people; animated with his prospects of usefulness among them; and unwilling to exchange these for an experiment of doubtful issue, in a strange place, he sent a negative answer to the invitation by the commissioner who delivered it.

While Mr. Rodgers was settled at St. George's, he not only served with fidelity the people of his own immediate charge; but such was his zeal for the advancement of his Master's cause and the salvation of souls, that he often visited those vacant congregations, or smaller settlements, which were destitute of stated ordinances, and preached to them, with much affection and indefatigable labour. Among other places of this description, he often preached and administered the sacraments among a large body of Presbyterians who were settled in Queen Anne's county, on the eastern shore of Maryland. In this neighbourhood his ministry was attended with remarkable success. On one occasion, more particularly, when he went to administer the Lord's Supper to the church there, a scene of more than ordinary interest was exhibited. Besides a large number of others admitted to full communion in the church at the same time, who had been baptized in their infancy, there were twenty-nine adults, on one day, publicly baptized. The greater part, if not all these persons, had been educated in connexion with the society of Friends; and were awakened, and brought, as was hoped, to embrace the gospel by the instrumentality of his ministry. He often spoke of that day as among the most gratifying and animated of his life.

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In 1762, Mr. Rodgers was chosen by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, to go on a mission to Great Britain and Ireland, to solicit benefactions toward the establishment of a "fund for the relief of poor and distressed Presbyterian ministers, their widows and children." A variety of considerations rendered this mission a very desirable one; and he certainly would have accepted the appointment, had not the situation of his family rendered impossible so long an absence from home, as would have been necessary to accomplish its purpose. The Rev. Charles Beatty,* another minister of eminence in the Presbyterian Church, was afterwards appointed to the same mission in the place of Mr. Rodgers, and fulfilled it to the great advan-

* The Rev. Charles Beatty was a native of Ireland. He obtained a pretty accurate classical education in his own country; but his circumstances being narrow, he migrated to America, and employed several of the first years of his residence on this side of the Atlantic in the business of a pedler. In the pursuit of this vocation, he halted, one day, at the "Log College," on the Neshaminy, then under the care of the Rev. William Tennent, the elder. The pedler, to Mr. Tennent's surprise, addressed him in correct Latin, and appeared to be familiar with that language. After much conversation, in which Mr. Beatty manifested fervent piety, and considerable religious knowledge, as well as a good education in other respects, Mr. Tennent addressed him thus: "You must quit your present employment. Go and sell the contents of your pack, and return immediately, and study with me. It will be a sin for you to continue a pedler, when you may be so much more useful in another profession." He accepted Mr. Tennent's offer; returned to Neshaminy; completed there his academical and theological studies; and in due time became an eminent minister. He died in Barbadoes, whither he had gone to solicit benefactions for the college of New Jersey, about the time of Mr. Rodgers's removal to New York.

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tage of the fund, and to the satisfaction of the Synod.

It is often said of the servants of God, that they are immortal till their work is done. And it is, at once, both pleasant and profitable to remark how often his protecting power is manifested in averting danger, and in prolonging their lives. The favour of a gracious Providence was, on various occasions, as conspicuously displayed in preserving Mr. Rodgers's life, as in blessing his labours. Of this fact, one instance, among many, shall suffice. Within the bounds of his congregation, and near the place of his residence, there lived an unhappy man, of the name of Marsh, who, borne down by domestic affliction, and besotted by habitual intemperance, had become weary of life. Unwilling to be guilty of suicide, which he supposed would be an unpardonable sin, as it might afford no time for repentance, he resolved to commit murder on some other person, that his own life might be taken by the hand of public justice. And, fearing that, if he murdered an obscure person, whose loss would affect the public mind in a comparatively small degree, he might be pardoned, and thus fail of attaining his object, he determined to select for this horrid purpose no other than his minister, whom he knew to be universally beloved, and whose importance in public sentiment, he was aware would produce an overwhelming weight of abhorrence and indignation against his murderer. Accordingly the miserable wretch made every preparation for executing his nefarious purpose. He watched the motions of Mr. Rodgers, with a loaded musket, day after day, for a considerable time, and eagerly sought for a favourable opportunity to destroy his life. He waylaid him when he rode abroad. He

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hovered about his door, at intervals, by day and night. But something always occurred to carry the object of his pursuit in a different direction from that which was expected, and thus to avert the intended mischief. The wife of Marsh first revealed to Mr. Rodgers the murderous purposes of her husband; and in consequence of this disclosure, the infatuated man was summoned before a neighbouring justice, and bound over to his good behaviour for a limited time. Mr. Rodgers himself appeared before the magistrate, and, by his zealous intercession, prevented his imprisonment. This generosity, however, on the part of his intended victim, produced no favourable effect on the mind of the unhappy man. He still sought, with most ingenious contrivance, some opportunity to execute his design; but was still providentially prevented. At length, wearied with unsuccessful attempts, and becoming altogether desperate, the abandoned mortal, on a certain night, when watching within a few feet of Mr. Rodgers's door, turned against himself the fatal weapon which he had prepared for his minister, and perished by his own hand!

On the 20th day of January, 1763, Mr. Rodgers was deprived, by death, of his wife, with whom he had lived, in the greatest happiness, for more than ten years. Of this bereavement he often spoke, to the end of life, with much tenderness, as the sorest and most distressing that he ever experienced: and there is reason to believe that he kept the anniversary of her decease, as a day of special prayer, as long as he lived. After living a widower more than a year and a half, he formed a second matrimonial connexion, on the 15th day of August, 1764, with Mrs. Mary Grant, the

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widow of Mr. William Grant, an eminent merchant of Philadelphia, and equally eminent for the fervour of his piety. Mr. Rodgers's connexion with this lady proved no less happy than that with the companion of his youth. She was truly a blessing to him to the end of life, and survived him about ten months. Her great firmness of mind; her remarkable prudence; her polished and dignified manners; her singular sweetness and evenness of temper, joined with fervent piety, endeared her to all that had the happiness of her acquaintance, and rendered her an excellent model for the wife of a clergyman.*

Mr. Rodgers, at an early period of his public life, had received a deep impression, that the wife of a minister of the gospel ought to be such a person as would prove a counsellor and aid in his official character, as well as in his private capacity. He believed, that, as an ambassador of Christ ought to have in view the usefulness of his ministry, and the honour of his Master, in every thing else, so also in his marriage. He was, therefore,

* This lady, whose family name was Antrobus, was a native of Manchester, in England. Her father was one of the colonists who came over to Georgia, with General Oglethorpe, in the year 1733, when she was about eight years of age. It is remarkable that both her husbands, as well as herself, were particular friends, and spiritual children of Mr. Whitefield. By Mr. Grant, she had several children, one of whom was the second wife of Col. John Bayard, late of New Brunswick, in New Jersey. By Dr. Rodgers she had one child, a daughter, who died a number of years before her parents. Mrs. Rodgers, after adorning her Christian profession, through the greater part of a century, was translated to a better world, on the 16th day of March, 1812, in the eighty-eighth year of her age.

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uniform and pointed in his advice to young ministers, not only to seek pious wives, but also to seek such as by their good sense, prudence, and amiableness of natural temper, might win the hearts of their parishioners, form an additional medium of intercourse and attachment between them, and prove examples to the flock. He often remarked, that no man could calculate the importance of such a companion to the usefulness, as well as to the comfort of his ministry, until he had made the experiment. His own conduct was, most happily, in perfect accordance with his advice; and the blessings, of which he often spoke, as resulting from a wise choice, were, in his own case no less happily realized.

In the month of April, 1765, Mr. Rodgers was elected one of the trustees of the College of New Jersey. It was not wonderful that his public spirit, his zeal for the promotion of useful knowledge, and his devoted attachment to the interests of evangelical truth, should have pointed him out thus early as one of the governors of an institution, consecrated by its venerable founders as a nursery for the Church. He entered on the duties of this appointment with cordiality; performing them with fidelity and diligence; and remained one of the most active and punctual of the whole Board, until within two or three years of his death; when, with the same disinterested and noble spirit which had long governed him, he resigned the office; assigning as his only reason, that he could no longer, as usual, discharge its duties; and soliciting the appointment of a more youthful and active member in his place.

But while the zeal and public spirit of Mr. Rodgers were directed to objects of various kinds,

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abroad as well as at home; and while, in every sphere in which he moved, his piety and diligence were conspicuous; he shone with peculiar lustre as a minister of Christ, and in discharging all the diversified, arduous, and interesting duties of a Christian Bishop. His family visitations; his incessant attention to the catechizing and other instruction of the youth; and his unwearied vigilance in watching over the interests of the flock of which he had been made overseer, have been already mentioned. It is also worthy of notice, that his more public services were not confined to the pulpit or the Sabbath. Whenever his health and the weather permitted, he was accustomed to appoint, from time to time, to preach on week-days in the houses of the sick, the infirm, or the aged; and thus while he went as a messenger of consolation to those who would not have been otherwise able to attend on his ministry, he carried the glad tidings of salvation to every corner within his reach, and to multitudes who had no disposition to seek them. He performed evangelical services of this kind, in private houses, so frequently, that almost every habitation in his parish had been more than once, and a number of them many times, employed in the solemnities of public worship.

It is hardly necessary to say, that a minister thus ardent, unwearied, and affectionate in all his pastoral duties, was highly popular in the neighbouring parishes, as well as his own. So great indeed, was this popularity, that it became, indirectly, the cause of no inconsiderable evil. Several of the adjacent congregations becoming vacant, by the death or removal of their ministers, while Mr. Rodgers resided at St. George's, so strong

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was the desire of all the members of those congregations who could travel so far, to attend on his preaching, and so small their hopes of being able to obtain pastors of comparable popularity with his, that they absolutely remained vacant as long as he continued to reside there; and, (to use the language of the venerable friend* who communicated this information,) would probably never have thought of any other man as long as he remained within their reach. In truth, the friends of religion, for many miles around, considered him as a spiritual father; looked up to him for counsel, and followed his ministrations with admiring ardour, to a degree rarely witnessed.

One little anecdote shall close the list of proofs on this subject. A year or two before Mr. Rodgers removed from St. George's, Mr. Whitefield had appointed, on a certain day, to preach within a few miles of his residence. The people of the neighbourhood assembled, at the appointed time, to the number of five or six thousand. Owing to some circumstances, now unknown, Mr. Whitefield never came. The people, after waiting in vain for a considerable time, urged Mr. Rodgers, who was present, to rise and address them. For any man, even with the best preparation, to take the place of Whitefield, and preach to an audience which he had been expected to address, would have been an arduous task; but to do this on a sudden call, and with scarcely any preparation, was much more so. Mr. Rodgers, however, made it one of the first principles of his ministry, never to shrink from any service to which the provi-

* The Rev. Dr. Thomas Read, of Wilmington, Delaware, to whom the writer is indebted for several interesting facts in the early part of the ministry of Dr. Rodgers.

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dence of God evidently called him. He, therefore, determined, without hesitation, to comply with the request of his friends; and, after a few moments' premeditation, rose and preached to the multitude in the open air. The consequences were happy. It proved, indeed, a day of power. It was the opinion of many who heard him, that, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of the occasion, the preacher scarcely ever spoke so acceptably or so well. He outdid himself. The congregation on dispersing unequivocally manifested that they had not been disappointed; and numbers had reason long to remember the solemnities of the day with grateful and adoring joy.

But Mr. Rodgers's ministry at St. George's was now drawing to a close. The death of the pious and venerable Mr. Bostwick, one of the pastors of the church in New York, laid the members of that church under the necessity of looking out for another minister. They again, as they had done ten years before, directed their views to Mr. Rodgers, and after a short time gave him a unanimous and affectionate call to be their pastor.

This call was dated in the month of January 1765. Its unanimity, importance, and urgency, on the one hand, and his attachment and usefulness to the people of St. George's, on the other, exceedingly agitated and embarrassed his mind, and rendered him unwilling to decide on the path of duty for himself. He therefore, when the call was laid before the Presbytery to which he belonged, on the 16th day of April following, referred the question, whether he ought to accept it or not, to that body. But the Presbytery, after hearing the commissioners from New York plead at great length, and with much eloquence, in favour

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of their call; and those from the congregation of St. George's, with no less ability and affection, against the removal of their pastor, determined that it was not expedient for them to decide the question; but referred the decision of it to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, which was to meet on the third Wednesday of May following, in the city of Philadelphia.

In the beginning of the next week, after the rising of the Presbytery which had been employed in considering the call from New York, another call reached the hands of Mr. Rodgers, earnestly inviting him to take the pastoral care of a large and important congregational church in Charleston, in South Carolina. Mr. Whitefield, being on a visit to Mr. Rodgers, a few days after the arrival of these calls, and prior to the meeting of the Synod, declared that he considered the aspect of providence as deciding that his work at St. George's was done, and that he was about to be removed from that place. But when asked which of the calls he thought Mr. Rodgers ought to accept; a question which his familiar acquaintance with both New York and Charleston gave him peculiar advantages for deciding; he declared himself unable to make up a decisive opinion. When the business came before the Synod, after a full and patient hearing of all parties, for near three days, and after special prayer to God for direction in the case, they decided by nearly a unanimous vote, that it was the duty of Mr. Rodgers to accept of the call from New York, of which accordingly he declared his acceptance, and his pastoral relation to the church at St. George's was immediately dissolved. This event took place on the 18th of May, 1765.

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Mr. Rodgers began, without delay, to prepare for his removal to the new scene of labour which the great Head of the Church had marked out for him. The struggle which attended his taking leave of his beloved people, was, as we have been told in a former page, affecting and painful in the highest degree. But the attention and cordiality with which he was received by the people of his new charge, speedily and happily alleviated the pain of this separation. He arrived in the city of New York, with his family, on the 24th day of July, 1765, and was installed pastor of the church in that place on the 4th day of September following, by the Presbytery of New York, of which he had, of course become a member.

CHAPTER IV.

A brief history of the Church in New York, anterior to the commencement of Mr. Rodgers's ministry as its pastor.

Before we proceed to the contemplation of Mr. Rodgers's ministry in New York, it will be proper to give some account of the rise and progress of the church in that city, in the pastoral charge of which he spent so large a part of his life. This is not only *desirable*, to gratify the curiosity of those who may feel an interest in the subject, but it is in a measure *necessary*, in order to the satisfactory illustration of the character and success of his labours, especially in the early part of his ministry in that church.

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The first account which we have of any Presbyterians, in the city of New York, from England, Scotland, or Ireland, is dated in the year 1706. For a number of years before that time, the Dutch Presbyterians from Holland, the French Presbyterians,* who had fled from the bloody persecutions

* Although the title of Presbyterian, is, in popular language, chiefly confined to the churches in Great Britain, and Ireland, and those who descended from them, who hold the doctrine of ministerial parity, and maintain a government by Presbyteries; yet the term, as every well informed reader knows, is much more extensive in its application. The Reformed churches of Holland, France, Germany, and Geneva, were all as really Presbyterian as that of Scotland. That is, they all, unanimously and decisively, maintained the parity of ministers; the scriptural warrant of Ruling Elders; and the government of larger districts of the church, by Presbyteries and Synods; in other words, by a number of ministers and ruling elders, sitting judicially, and deciding authoritatively on the general concerns of the church in a kingdom or province. Nay, even the Lutheran churches in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, &c., at the era of the Reformation, adopted the essential principles of Presbyterian government. They all maintained, and do to the present day maintain, the ordaining power of Presbyters; and many of them have ruling elders in their churches. Luther himself, as was before stated, though only a Presbyter, ordained a number of ministers, and declared ordination by Presbyters to be the apostolic mode. In short, the whole Protestant world, excepting the Church of England, and those who have descended from her, at the period of the Reformation, either adopted Presbyterian principles, in all their extent, or recognized and incorporated the essential parts of that system in their respective ecclesiastical constitutions. The Reformation in England, being chiefly carried on by the bishops; they, as might naturally have been expected, being unwilling to relinquish their pre-eminence, concurred with the civil power in retaining prelacy, among a number of other relics of popery. That the Waldenses, the Albigenses and the Bohemian breth-

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which followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Episcopalians of the Church of England, and a few German Lutherans, constituted almost the whole of the ecclesiastical population of the city. In the year just mentioned, it appears that a small number of Presbyterian families, which had chiefly emigrated from Great Britain and Ireland, together with a very few individuals, as there is reason to believe, from New England, were in the habit of meeting together for social worship.* They had, however, no organized church, no pastor, nor any public building in which they convened. They assembled in a private house, and employed themselves when together, in reading the Scriptures and other pious writings, and in prayer and praise, conducted alternately by the most pious and prudent of their number.

In the month of January, 1707, the Rev. Francis

ren; and after them, Wickliffe, Zuinglius, Luther, Calvin, and the whole body of Reformers on the continent of Europe, should have rejected prelacy, as an ordinance of Divine right, and expressly maintained the essential principles of Presbyterianism, really furnishes a most important body of evidence in favour of that truly apostolic and primitive form of church order. This evidence, however, is not wanted. The New Testament, and especially the Acts of the Apostles, taken in connexion with the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, so conclusively refute all prelatical claims, and so firmly establish the Presbyterian doctrine, that we need no confirmation derived from human authority. See "Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry." Vol. 1, Letter VI., and Vol. 2, Letters VI. VII. VIII.

* Of this number, the names of only five persons are now known, viz. David Jamieson, Esq., Capt. John Theobalds, Mr. John Vanhorne, Mr. William Jackson, and Mr. Anthony Young.

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McKemie, and the Rev. John Hampton, two Presbyterian ministers, who had been for some time engaged in preaching the gospel in different parts of Virginia and Maryland,* paid a visit to New York, on their way to Boston. On their arrival in the city, having made known their character, and produced the most unquestionable testimonials of their good standing, leave was obtained for Mr. McKemie to preach in the Dutch church, in Garden street, while Mr. Hampton rode over to New Town, on Long Island, for the purpose of

* These gentlemen had been sent out, by a respectable body of dissenters in the city of London, for the purpose of serving as evangelists in the middle and southern colonies of America. Mr. McKemie, the more eminent of these two evangelists, was a native of Ireland. He came to America about the year 1700; and fixed his habitation on the peninsula between the Delaware and Chesapeake bays, in the county of Accomack, Virginia, very near the Maryland line. From this spot as the centre of his operations, he went forth in all directions, preaching the gospel wherever he found people willing to hear him. The Episcopal clergy of Virginia, becoming much alarmed and incensed at his evangelical labours, had influence enough to cause him to be arrested and carried over the bay to Williamsburgh, to answer for the crime of preaching the gospel. But such was the force of his talents, and the fascination of his address, that he conciliated the Governor, who became his friend, and not only licensed his dwelling-house as a place of worship, but also gave him a general license to preach in the dominion. Mr. McKemie was a man of eminent piety, as well as of strong intellectual powers. His conversion was early and remarkable. In a pamphlet which he published in Virginia, in reply to an errorist, who had charged him with denying the influences of the Holy Spirit, he declared, that "so far from denying them, he believed them to be indispensable to all real religion; and had reason to thank God that, at fourteen years of age, under the instructions of a pious schoolmaster, he felt their power on his own soul."

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preaching to the Presbyterian church which had been for some time planted in that place. Lord Cornbury, a cousin of Queen Anne, and a most bigoted Episcopalian, was then governor of the province of New York.* His Lordship, hearing of the permission which had been given to Mr. McKemie by the minister and consistory of the Dutch church, utterly prohibited his preaching in that church. Under these circumstances, Mr. McKemie preached a single sermon, at the house of Mr. William Jackson, at the lower end of Pearl street, to a small audience, and baptized a child, with open doors. On the succeeding Tuesday he

* The meanness as well as the contemptible bigotry of this man, will appear from the following anecdote, of unquestionable authenticity. The Presbyterians of Jamaica, on Long Island, had erected a commodious edifice for the worship of God, and also possessed a handsome parsonage-house and glebe, which they had enjoyed undisturbed for many years. A short time previous to the year 1702, when Lord Cornbury arrived, a few Episcopalians having settled in the town, began to view the Presbyterian church with a jealous eye; and at length carried their insolent violence so far as to seize on the church, between the morning and afternoon services, and endeavour to hold it for the use of their own sect. After much controversy, it was recovered out of their hands, and restored to its proper owners. In the midst of this contest, in the summer of 1702, a malignant fever breaking out in the city of New York, Lord Cornbury retired to Jamaica. The parsonage-house, in which the Rev. Mr. Hubbard, the minister of the church, lived, was the best in the town. His Lordship begged the loan of it for the use of his family; and Mr. Hubbard put himself to no small inconvenience to comply with his request. In return for this generous conduct, his Lordship, on retiring from the house, perfidiously delivered it into the hands of the Episcopal party, whose feelings and principles permitted them to receive it. *Smith*, 119.

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went over to New Town to join his companion, and to fulfil an appointment which had been made for him to preach there the next day. Here he and Mr. Hampton were arrested, by the sheriff of Queen's county, by virtue of a warrant from Lord Cornbury, and were led in triumph a circuitous route, through Jamaica, to the city of New York, where they were carried before the Governor, and, by his order, were thrown into prison. In consequence of the absence of the Chief Justice, they continued in confinement near two months. At the end of which time, they were brought before that officer by a writ of habeas corpus, and admitted to bail.* In the month of June following, Mr. McKemie returned from Virginia to New York, to attend the sessions of the supreme court, when his trial came on; in the course of which it is difficult to say, whether he was most conspicuous for his talents as a man, or for his dignity and piety, as a minister of the gospel.† The jury ac-

* As Mr. Hampton had not preached in the city, no bill was found against him by the grand jury; and he was of course discharged.

† See an account of this trial in Smith's History of New York; and still more at large in a formal report of the trial, entitled, "A Narrative of a new and unusual American imprisonment, of two Presbyterian Ministers, and prosecution of Mr. Francis McKemie, one of them, for preaching one Sermon in the city of New York, 1707." The following short extract from the trial, will show the spirit and firmness with which Mr. McKemie treated his persecutors.

Mr. *Attorney*. You own that you preached a sermon, and baptized a child, at Mr. William Jackson's.

Mr. *McKemie*. Yes, I did.

Mr. *Attor*. How many hearers had you?

Mr. *McK*. I have other work to do, Mr. Attorney, than to number my auditory, when I am about to preach to them.

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quitted him. But, through the glaring and shameful partiality of the court, he was not discharged from his recognizance until they had illegally extorted from him all the fees of his prosecution, which, together with his expenses, amounted to between two and three hundred dollars.

These proceedings were not only in the highest

Mr. *Attor.* Were there above five hearing you?

Mr. *McK.* Yes, and five to that.

Mr. *Attor.* Did you use the rites and ceremonies enjoined by, and prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, by the Church of England?

Mr. *McK.* No, I never did, nor never will, until I am better satisfied in my conscience.

Mr. *Attor.* Did you ask leave, or acquaint my Lord Cornbury with your preaching at York, when you dined with him at the Fort?

Mr. *McK.* I did not know of my preaching at York, when I dined with his excellency; no, not for some days after. For when we came to York, we had not the least intention, or design of preaching there; but stopped at York, purely to pay our respects to the Governor, which we did; but being afterwards called, and invited to preach, as I am a minister of the gospel, I durst not deny preaching, nor I hope I never shall, where it is wanting and desired.

Mr. *Attor.* Did you not acquaint my Lord Cornbury with the place of your preaching?

Mr. *McK.* As soon as I determined to preach, leave was asked, though not by me; for it was the people's business, and not mine, to provide a place for me to preach in. And I would have been admitted to preach in the Dutch church; but they were afraid of offending Lord Cornbury. And Mr. Anthony Young went to the governor, to have his leave, or permission, for my preaching in the Dutch church; though all this was done without so much as my knowledge; but my lord opposing and denying it, I was under a necessity of preaching where I did, in a private house, though in a public manner, with open doors.

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degree unjust and oppressive; but they had not even a shadow of law to support them. The act of the provincial assembly, passed in 1693, "For settling a ministry in the city of New York, and counties of Richmond, West Chester, and Queen's," and which was the only law on the subject then in force, merely provided for the induction and support of a "good and sufficient Protestant minister," in each of those counties; leaving all denominations on a perfect parity. It was even by a mere arbitrary construction, that the terms, "good and sufficient Protestant minister," were considered as meaning a minister of the Episcopal denomination; for there was nothing in the law that rendered such a construction necessary. This construction, however, was adopted and acted upon; and the Presbyterians, feeble and oppressed, were compelled, for the greater part of a century, besides supporting their own church, to contribute their quota toward the support of the Episcopal church, already enriched by governmental favour.

The small body of Presbyterians above mentioned, however, notwithstanding the signal oppression which they experienced in this instance, were not discouraged. The removal of their bitter enemy, Lord Cornbury, from the government of New York, which took place in 1708, was favourable to their prosperity.* They kept together,

* Lord Cornbury was the son of the Earl of Clarendon. "Hunted out of England by a host of hungry creditors; bent upon accumulating as much wealth as he could squeeze from the purses of an impoverished people; and animated with unequalled zeal for the Episcopal church, he commenced his administration, as successor of Lord Bellamont, May 3d, 1702. He was trifling, mean, and extravagant. Never was there a governor of New York

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and continued, with few interruptions, and with a gradual increase of their number, to meet for worship, without a minister, until the year 1716, when John Nicoll, Patrick McKnight, Gilbert Livingston, Thomas Smith, and a few others, conceived the plan of forming themselves into a regular Presbyterian church, and calling a stated pastor. They immediately took measures for that purpose; and, in the summer of the same year, gave a call to the Rev. James Anderson, a native of Scotland, then residing in the town of Newcastle, in Delaware, to be their minister.* The call was referred, by the Presbytery, to a commission of the Synod of Philadelphia, who decided, in the month of September, that Mr. Anderson ought to accept the call. He accordingly accepted it; and removed, with his family, to New York, toward the latter end of October following.

For near three years after Mr. Anderson's settlement in New York, he and his infant congregation assembled for public worship in the City Hall, the use of which was liberally granted them

so universally detested, or so deserving of abhorrence. The cries of the oppressed, reaching the ears of the Queen, in 1708, she appointed Lord Lovelace governor in his stead. As soon as Cornbury was superseded, his creditors threw him into the custody of the sheriff of New York: but after the death of his father, he was permitted to return to England, and succeeded to the Earldom of Clarendon." *Smith.*

* Mr. Anderson was born November 17th, 1678. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Irvine, November, 17th, 1708. He left Scotland, March 6th, 1709; and arrived at Rappahannock, in Virginia, the 22d of April following. He became a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, September, 1710; and settled in Newcastle a short time afterwards.

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for that purpose, by the corporation of the city. In 1718, the four gentlemen last named, purchased a piece of ground in Wall street, near Broadway, on which, in the year 1719, they erected the first Presbyterian church, that was founded in the city of New York. To meet the expenses which attended this pious enterprise, their own subscriptions, and the donations which they received from the few, of other denominations in the city, who favoured their plan, were by no means sufficient. To assist them, a public collection was taken up for their benefit in the colony of Connecticut; and a still larger collection in Scotland, by order of the General Assembly of that church. This last was effected chiefly, under Providence, by the indefatigable zeal and exertions of Dr. John Nicoll, an eminent physician of New York, who early cast in his lot with the Presbyterians of that city, and who, for a number of years, did more than all others, to promote the interests of their church.*

* Dr. John Nicoll was born in Scotland, and obtained a liberal education in the arts and sciences, and in medicine, in the university of Edinburgh, where he was graduated. His exertions in behalf of the church in New York, were as useful as they were unwearied. He died in the year 1743, in the sixty-fourth year of his age. In a sermon, preached on the occasion of his death by the Rev. Dr. Pemberton, at that time the pastor of the church, and which was afterwards printed, the following paragraph is found. "These walls will be a lasting monument of his zeal for the house and the public worship of God; in the erecting of which he spent a considerable part of his estate, and undertook a hazardous voyage to Europe, for the establishment and security of this infant society. Upon these, and other accounts, too numerous to be mentioned, while a Presbyterian church subsists in the city of New York, the name of Nicoll will ever be remembered with

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He took a voyage to Scotland for the purpose of engaging the interest of the General Assembly in behalf of this infant church, and at length succeeded in accomplishing his purpose.

In the month of March, 1720, Mr. Anderson, and the officers of his church, presented a petition to Peter Schuyler, Esquire, president of the king's council, in the absence of Governor Hunter, praying for a charter of incorporation. The president was himself friendly to the prayer of the petition, and the council, at first, reported in favour of granting it. But the hopes of the petitioners were frustrated by the interference, and zealous exertions of the vestry of Trinity church, against their application. A member of that vestry appeared, officially, before the council, and strongly opposed their granting the solicited charter; in consequence of which it was finally refused.

Soon after Governor Burnet's arrival, in the autumn of 1720, Mr. Anderson and his church renewed their application for a charter. The governor himself spoke favourably of their design, and professed himself their friend; but they were again defeated, by the determined resistance of the vestry of Trinity church.

Mr. Anderson, though a man of talents, learning, and piety, and a graceful, popular preacher, had not been long settled as the pastor of the church in New York, before some serious dissatisfaction arose between him and a portion of his people. A considerable number of them having been accustomed to the less rigid habits of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of South Britain, were

honour, as one of its principal founders, and its greatest benefactor."

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not pleased with the strict Presbyterianism, according to the Scottish model, which he endeavoured to enforce. They charged him with a spirit of ecclesiastical domination, and with an improper interference in the temporal concerns of the church. On these accounts the uneasiness of the dissatisfied party became at length so great, that in the year 1722, they drew off from the body of the congregation; formed themselves into a distinct society; and worshipped, it is believed, in a small building, in William street, between Liberty and Wall streets, for a number of months.*

The new society, soon after their organization, invited Mr. Jonathan Edwards, afterwards president of the college of New Jersey, and then a candidate for the gospel ministry, to come and preach to them. He accordingly came, about the beginning of August, 1722, and supplied their pulpit to good acceptance, until the latter end of the following April; when, finding the congregation too small to support a minister, and perceiving some unexpected difficulties to arise, he left the city, and returned to his father's house, at Windsor, in Connecticut.† He was earnestly solicited indeed by

* Of this new society, which broke off from the parent church, but few of the members are now known. It is believed that the Hon. William Smith, a native of Newport Pagnel, in England, who came to New York in 1715, and who became eminent, as a Counsellor at law, as a Judge, and as a member of the king's council, was the leader. He returned to the original church, not long afterwards; and was, for near forty years, among her most active, useful, and important members.

† The Rev. Jonathan Edwards, was born at Windsor, in Connecticut, October 5th, 1703. He received his education at Yale College, where he graduated bachelor of arts in 1720. He was licensed to preach the gospel, and

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the congregation to pay them another visit; but judging from what he saw, when among them, that it was not his duty, he declined a compliance with their second invitation. Whether they ever called any other preacher, and how long they continued in a state of separation from the main body of the church, is not known. It is believed, however, that soon after Mr. Edwards left them, they perceived the impossibility of their going on with comfort as a separate congregation, and quietly returned to their old connexion.

In the summer of the year 1726, Mr. Anderson received a call from New Donegal, in Pennsylvania, which he accepted; and removed thither with his family in the month of October following, where he died, July 16, 1740.

In the month of April, 1727, Mr. Ebenezer

actually commenced his labours in New York, before he was nineteen years of age. In 1727 he was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, at Northampton, in Massachusetts; and in 1757 was elected President of the college of New Jersey, where he died, in March, 1758, in less than two months after his induction into office, in the fifty-fifth year of his age. Mr. Edwards possessed an acuteness, vigour, and comprehensiveness of mind, which unquestionably placed him in the very first rank of great men belonging to the age in which he lived. His Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will, has been pronounced, by the best judges, to be "one of the greatest efforts of the human mind;" and has been considered and quoted, ever since its publication, as a great standard work on the subject of which it treats. His work on Original Sin, is little, if at all, inferior to the former: and his treatise on Religious Affections is among the most deep, clear, and discriminating works on the evidences of vital piety, that the world ever saw. It is one of the honours of the Presbyterian church of New York, that a portion of it enjoyed, for eight months, the preaching of Jonathan Edwards.

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Pemberton, a licentiate, of the town of Boston, paid a visit to the vacant church in New York, and preached to such acceptance, that all parties united in giving him an affectionate and urgent call to become their pastor. Mr. Pemberton accepted this call, and immediately returned to Boston, where he was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry on the 9th of August, in the same year, with a special view to his taking charge of the church in New York, by the association which had licensed him. Soon after his ordination, he came back, and entered on his pastoral charge.* Mr. Pemberton was a respectable, diligent, and useful preacher and pastor. The church prospered under his ministrations; and he held a conspicuous and honourable place among the ministers of the city.

After repeated attempts, for several years, to obtain an act of incorporation, without success, the congregation, feeling that the tenure by which they held their property was insecure, and fearing that the same religious sect which had opposed the granting of their request, would watch for an opportunity to give them a more fatal blow,† deter-

* The Rev. Ebenezer Pemberton was the son of a distinguished clergyman of the same name. He was born in Boston in the year 1704, and was graduated at Harvard College in 1721. Soon after his licensure, he visited New York, where he afterwards settled. When he left New York, in 1753, he returned to Boston, and became pastor of the new brick church in that town, as the successor of the Rev. Mr. Welsteed, where he continued until his death, which took place September 9th, 1777, in the seventy-third year of his age. Mr. Pemberton, after his removal to Boston, received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the College of New Jersey.

† See Smith's History of New York, p. 209, 210.

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mined to take decisive measures to secure themselves. Accordingly, the individuals who had been invested with the fee-simple of their church and ground in Wall street, "conveyed it, on the 16th of March, 1730, to the moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the commission thereof; the moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh; the principal of the College of Edinburgh; the professor of divinity therein; and the procurator and agent of the Church of Scotland, for the time being, and their successors in office, as a committee of the General Assembly." And on the 15th day of August, 1732, the Church of Scotland, by an instrument under the seal of the General Assembly, and signed by Mr. Neil Campbell, principal of the University of Glasgow, and moderator of the General Assembly, and commission thereof, Mr. James Nesbit, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, and moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh; Mr. William Hamilton, principal of the University of Edinburgh; Mr. James Smith, professor of divinity therein; and Mr. William Grant, advocate, procurator for the Church of Scotland, for the time being, pursuant to an act of the General Assembly, dated May, 1731, did declare, "That notwithstanding the aforesaid right made to them, and their successors in office, they were desirous that the aforesaid building and edifice, and appurtenances thereof, be preserved for the pious and religious purposes for which the same were designed; and that it should be free and lawful to the Presbyterians, then residing, or that should, at any time thereafter, be resident in or near the aforesaid city of New York, in America, or others joining with them, to convene in the aforesaid church, for the worship of God in all the

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parts thereof, and for the dispensation of all gospel ordinances; and, generally, to use and occupy the said church, and its appurtenances, fully and freely, in all times coming, they maintaining and supporting the edifice and appurtenances at their own charge."*

As long as Dr. Nicoll lived, the management of the temporal concerns of the church was, by common consent, committed almost unreservedly to his care. He conducted them with so much fidelity and judgment, that very little real inconvenience was experienced from the want of a charter, and of a regular board of trustees. From the period of his death, in 1743, a different method began to be pursued. The congregation agreed to place the management of their temporalities in the hands of a number of gentlemen, under the name of trustees, though without their corporate powers. A plan was drawn up for this purpose, specifying the nature of the trust, and the extent of the powers committed to them; and eight persons were fixed upon, at a parish meeting, for the execution of this plan. Of this number, two were to go out every year, and two new ones to be chosen in their room by the trustees themselves; reserving, however, to the congregation at large, a right to interfere in the mode of appointing trustees, when it should be thought necessary.

The congregation, though gradually increasing, continued very small, until the year 1739, in which, and in the two following years, God was pleased to visit it, in common with many other parts of the then American colonies, with a remarkable effusion of his Holy Spirit. Mr. Pemberton was greatly

* Smith's History of New York, p. 210.

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quickened and animated in his work; the preaching of the word was attended with uncommon power; sinners were hopefully convinced and converted; saints were edified and comforted; and numbers were added to the church.

In the year 1740, the celebrated Mr. Whitefield first visited New York. Mr. Pemberton was the only clergyman in the city who invited that apostolic man to his pulpit. The consequences were, to him and his people, happy. Mr. Whitefield's preaching was made a blessing to many. Thousands, of different denominations, flocked to the church to hear him; a number of families and individuals who found benefit, continued to worship there; some of whom became regular members. From this source, therefore, and on this occasion, the church received very important additions. In the mean time, Mr. Pemberton himself was abundant in his labours, and happy in his success. The small edifice in which his church worshipped was soon filled, and began to overflow. In a little while it became necessary to erect galleries in it, of which it was destitute before; and even with the addition of these, it was, not long afterwards, found too small to accommodate the worshippers.

Under these circumstances, an enlargement of the building was thought advisable. Accordingly, in the year 1748, it was enlarged, nearly a third, to the size at which it remained until the beginning of the year 1810, when it was taken down, to make way for a larger edifice. Mr. Whitefield visited New York repeatedly in the course of his long stay in America, from 1744 to 1748; and his preaching there, as well as elsewhere, was eminently popular and successful. It must always be reckoned among the signal honours, and great

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advantages of the Presbyterian church in New York, that it enjoyed so large a portion of the American labours of that extraordinary servant of Jesus Christ.

The congregation still continuing to increase, and the labours of the pulpit and of the parish being considered as too great for an individual, it was thought proper to call a colleague for Mr. Pemberton. The attention of the people was soon directed toward the Rev. Alexander Cumming, a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, and a young gentleman of eminent talents and piety.* On paying them a visit, he preached so much to their acceptance, that they gave him a unanimous call to be one of their pastors. He accepted the call, and was ordained and installed collegiate pastor of their church, in the month of October, in the year 1750. Mr. Cumming was a man of a remarkably clear and discriminating mind; a close student, and an instructive, excellent preacher. He had a singularly happy faculty of disentangling and exhibiting the most abstruse and intricate subjects; and was peculiarly acceptable to the more discerning classes of his hearers.

But no happiness is complete, no tranquillity

* The Rev. Alexander Cumming, the son of Mr. Robert Cumming, from Montrose, in Scotland, was born at Freehold, New Jersey, in the year 1726. He received his academical education partly at Freehold, and partly under the direction of his uncle, the Rev. Samuel Blair, at Fagg's Manor, in Pennsylvania. He studied theology in his native place, under the care of the Rev. William Tennent. He was licensed to preach the gospel, by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, in 1746 or 1747; and in a short time afterwards was appointed a stated supply of the church in the city of New Brunswick, where he resided several years as a licentiate, before his removal to New York.

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permanent, in this world. Though the congregation had been, for some time, greatly prospered; and though its members had every reason to rejoice in the character of their ministers, and in the goodness and grace of their God, yet a *root of bitterness* soon began to spring up, which interrupted their comfort, and finally produced the most unhappy fruits.

A large and respectable portion of the congregation consisted of emigrants from Scotland and the north of Ireland. These were universally attached to the order and discipline of the church of Scotland, and lamented every departure from that model. Another and highly influential portion having emigrated either from South Britain, or from New England, rather leaned to the more lax plan of church order, which prevailed in their respective countries. As Mr. Pemberton, their old pastor, had received his education in New England, and probably felt an attachment to the religious habits of his early life, there is reason to suppose that his inclinations and his influence coincided with the wishes of the latter. And as Mr. Cumming, though educated a Presbyterian, settled, not long after, in a Congregational church, it is more than likely that he had no insuperable objections to the Congregational form of government. However this may be, it is certain that, for some time prior to the year 1750, the Presbyterian plan had not been strictly adhered to in the church of New York. There were deacons, but no ruling elders. Such of the trustees as were communicants, together with the deacons, acted as a sort of committee for assisting the minister in the exercise of discipline. In short, in conducting the internal affairs of the church, under the

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name of Presbyterianism, the congregational system was really adopted and maintained.

This circumstance gave great dissatisfaction to the friends of genuine, consistent Presbyterianism. It grieved them, not merely as a departure from their ancient habits, but also as less adapted to edification than a different course. They also complained of the conduct of the trustees. They alleged that that body, chosen by the people to manage the temporalities of the church, had officiously and improperly interfered in its spiritual concerns. And, as the most effectual method of obviating all these difficulties, they urged the election and ordination of a bench of ruling elders, who should judicially conduct the discipline of the church, and leave the other classes of officers to act each in their appropriate sphere. The opposing party, however, were by no means disposed to acquiesce in this plan. Things proceeded in their former course, and the uneasiness continued without abatement.

After a short time, this uneasiness received important addition from a new source. In 1752, there was an attempt made to introduce into the church a new version of the book of Psalms. Until this time Rouse's, or, as it is commonly called, the "old Scotch version," had been in constant use in public worship. The greater part of those who had been accustomed to this version, wished still to retain it. Those who wished for a change, were not agreed among themselves. A few leading individuals of this party were desirous of adopting the version of Tate and Brady; but a great majority were very decisive and zealous in their preference of Dr. Watts's imitation. In this controversy the trustees took the lead, and were far

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from being so judicious and tender in their mode of conducting it as many supposed they ought to have been. Indeed there appears to have been a degree of animosity and violence on all sides, which could by no means be justified. The party in favour of Dr. Watts's Psalms at length prevailed, and they were introduced.

This event, however, was very far from allaying the ferment. The portion of the people who favoured strict Presbyterianism and the old version of Psalms, determined to apply to the Presbytery for direction and advice; and in this application, the other party, at length, appeared to have concurred. The Presbytery was accordingly consulted on these subjects in the month of September, 1752. That body, knowing the importance and difficulty of deciding in the case, referred the whole controversy to the Synod, which met a few days afterwards at Newark, in New Jersey. The Synod took up the reference, and with great deliberation and judgment decided on the several articles of complaint. They directed that ruling elders be immediately chosen, and set apart in the congregation. They gave leave to continue the use of Dr. Watts's imitation of the Psalms of David, as orthodox and evangelical, especially as it appeared to be the choice of a majority; but they expressed their disapprobation of the manner in which it had been introduced, by a vote of the trustees, and a few other persons, without formally consulting the body of the church.

A committee, appointed by the Synod, came over to the city the next week to counsel and aid the congregation in carrying these decisions into effect. They saw the order respecting the choice and setting apart of elders executed without delay;

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and their prudent advice and exertions were of much use in allaying the heat of the animosity which prevailed, and in inducing both parties to recede, in a degree, from their demands and criminations.

But the spirit of contention had become too inveterate to be speedily and effectually removed. Animosities, though allayed, were not extinguished. The want of prudence, and of a spirit of forbearance and conciliation, was manifested, in a lamentable degree, by both parties. And it became, in a little while, apparent, that much more remained to be done, before peace and harmony could be restored.

Hitherto these contentions had been confined to the members of the congregation. The pastors, though known to have opinions on the several subjects which became grounds of uneasiness, had as yet been able to stand, in a great measure, aloof from the contention, and to maintain a good understanding with both parties. This, however, in some measure, ceased to be the case in 1753. In that year, the party favourable to strict Presbyterian discipline, and to the old version of Psalms, began to prefer complaints against the ministers, as well as against their opponents in the congregation. They complained of the ministers — for giving exhortations at funerals, when requested by the friends of deceased persons to do so:—for not paying formal ministerial visits, according to the usage of the Church of Scotland:—for making the introductory prayer, in public worship, reading the Scriptures, and giving out the first Psalm, from the clerk's desk, instead of the pulpit: and finally, for secretly favouring the introduction of the new system of psalmody. These complaints

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were laid before the Presbytery, together with some new grounds of uneasiness which had arisen among the people themselves; and were, by that body, as in the former instance, referred to the Synod of New York, which met in Philadelphia, in the beginning of October, 1753. The Synod after hearing the reference, appointed a large and respectable committee of their body to meet in New York, on the 24th day of the same month, to examine and decide upon all the grounds of uneasiness which had been exhibited to them. The committee met on the day appointed; and after a full and patient hearing of all parties, completely exculpated the ministers from the charges preferred against them; and decided with much wisdom on all the other grounds of mutual complaint between the different parties in the congregation. And having exhorted the parties, with great solemnity and tenderness, to lay aside all animosity, and to study the things which make for peace, they adjourned till the next morning.

The next day Mr. Pemberton and Mr. Cumming appeared before the committee of Synod, and requested to be dismissed from their pastoral charge. The reasons which they assigned for this request were, the unhappy divisions subsisting among the people; the appearances of dissatisfaction on the part of the people toward them; and the small prospect of success, under these circumstances, in their future ministrations. In addition to these considerations, Mr. Cumming urged the feeble and declining state of his health, which rendered him altogether incapable of fulfilling the duties of his office.

Mr. Cumming's situation forbidding delay, the committee granted his request, and, on the 25th

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day of October, 1753, dissolved the pastoral relation which he had borne about three years. His dismission was a most honourable one, and was accompanied with ample testimonials of his excellent Christian, and ministerial standing.* Mr. Pemberton, being in good health, and having endeared himself by a long and useful residence of twenty-six years with the congregation, the opposition made to his dismission was warmer and more serious: so great, indeed, was the opposition, that the committee of Synod determined not to comply with his request immediately; but advised him to remain one month longer with the congregation, and in case he should see no prospect, at the end of that time, of comfort and usefulness in his pastoral charge, they declared him at liberty to retire, and, in this way, gave him a kind of conditional dismission. He submitted to the judgment of the committee, and made the further trial which they proposed; but when the month was expired, he left the city, to the great grief of a majority of the congregation, who considered the reasons for his departure as by no means sufficient.

The congregation were deeply affected with this dispensation of Providence, in being deprived of both their ministers at once; and also with the unhappy divisions which had led to this bereave-

* Mr. Cumming, after being liberated from his pastoral charge in New York, received a call from the Old South church, in Boston, to be a colleague with their aged and venerable pastor, the Rev. Dr. Sewall. He accepted the call; and resided in Boston, with honour to himself, and with usefulness to the church, about ten years. He died August 25th, 1763, greatly respected, and universally lamented.

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ment. They determined, therefore, in their congregational capacity, to humble themselves before God, and to unite in special prayer for the removal of their difficulties. For this purpose they set apart a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, to confess their sins as a people, and to implore the divine direction in the choice of a minister. They requested the Presbytery to appoint one of their number, to attend and conduct the services of the day. Their request was granted; a member of the Presbytery attended for the purpose; and the 31st of December, 1753, was accordingly observed in this manner, with great solemnity. After the public exercises of the day were closed, due notice of the design having been given, the congregation proceeded to deliberate on the propriety of calling another minister. They unanimously agreed that it was proper then to make a choice; and the Rev. Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlem, in Connecticut, was accordingly chosen.* In pursuance of this vote, a call for Mr. Bellamy was drawn up and prosecuted, with the concurrence of the Presbytery; but he declined accepting it. At the instance of a number of the congregation, especially of those

* The Rev. Joseph Bellamy, D. D., was born at New Cheshire, Connecticut, in 1719, and was graduated at Yale College, in 1735. He was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed pastor of the church in Bethlem, in 1740, and died March 6th, 1790, in the seventy-second year of his age. The eminent talents; the ardent piety; the indefatigable labours; the numerous publications; and the great ministerial usefulness of Dr. Bellamy, are too well known to require the language of eulogium in this place. Dr. Rodgers, after he came to New York, was well acquainted with him, and greatly honoured him, as a man of strong original powers; as an able divine: and as an eminently devoted minister of Jesus Christ.

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who were charged with being the principal fomenters of division among them, a second call was prepared and sent to Mr. Bellamy, and prosecuted with great zeal. But, that gentleman finding that there was not, still, that unanimity in the call, which might have been wished, gave, the second time, a negative answer, in a letter, bearing date July 18th, 1754.

In the month of November of the same year, the congregation, as before related, made a very pressing application to Mr. Rodgers, the subject of this memoir, who then resided at St. George's, in Delaware, to come and preach to them, with a view to settlement. They entertained strong hopes that he might be the happy means of healing their divisions, and of promoting their best interests. Mr. Rodgers, however, thought it his duty to decline accepting the invitation, which he did by the return of the messenger who carried it.

In the month of January, 1755, the congregation, by the advice of the Presbytery, gave a call to the Rev. David McGregor,* of Londonderry, in

* The Rev. David McGregor was born in Ireland. He was the son of the Rev. James McGregor, who had the pastoral charge of a Presbyterian church in the north of Ireland, who emigrated to Massachusetts in 1718, and soon afterwards settled in New Hampshire, near Haverhill, on a tract of land called Nutfield, but which he, and the families who emigrated and settled with him, called New Londonderry. He laboured in the gospel ministry in that place about ten years, and died March 5th, 1729. He was a pious, able, and faithful minister, whose memory is still affectionately cherished in the place of his residence. His son David accompanied him to America, in the eighth year of his age. He was ordained to the work of the ministry, in 1735; and was minister of the second Presbyterian church in New Londonderry; where he died

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New Hampshire, a member of the Presbytery of Boston. This call was regularly prosecuted before his Presbytery, which met at Pelham, in the month of April, of that year, and afterwards in Boston, on the 14th of May following. Mr. McGregor considering the state of the church in New York as highly unfavourable both to the comfort and usefulness of a minister, felt himself constrained to give an answer in the negative.

These repeated disappointments, while they almost discouraged the congregation, served also to humble them, and to make them feel more than ever their dependence on the King of Zion for the supply of a pastor, as well as for all other mercies. There is every reason to believe, that dispensations so painful and humiliating formed a part of their preparation to receive more gladly and more profitably, the minister who was afterwards provided for them.

In the month of July, 1755, they gave a call to the Rev. David Bostwick,* pastor of the church

May 30th, 1777, in the 67th year of his age. He appears to have resembled his father in his personal and ministerial character.

* The Rev. David Bostwick was a native of New Milford, Connecticut, where he was born in the year 1721. At the age of fifteen he entered Yale College, and was graduated, after the usual course of study. On leaving college, he was engaged as a teacher, in an academy at Newark, New Jersey, under the inspection of the Rev. Mr. Burr, afterwards president of the college of New Jersey. He was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed pastor of the church of Jamaica, on Long Island, October 9th, 1745. The sermon on that occasion was preached by the Rev. Mr. Burr, and afterwards published. Here Mr. Bostwick remained more than ten years, enjoying in a very high degree the affection and respect, not only of the people of his charge, but also of his

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of Jamaica, on Long Island, a member of their own Presbytery. The people of Jamaica made warm and persevering opposition to the removal of their minister; and the divided state of the church in New York, formed another obstacle to his accepting their call. The Presbytery, on the call being laid before them, referred a decision upon the subject to the Synod, which met in Newark, in the month of September following. The Synod appointed a committee to meet at Jamaica, on the 29th of the next month, that they might deliberate more at leisure, and decide with more light, than the whole Synod could be supposed to do, in the midst of other business, and at a distance from Mr. Bostwick's place of residence. The committee met agreeably to appointment; when the elders, deacons, and trustees of the Church in New York, presented a memorial, praying in the most earnest, yet respectful terms, that they would not only put the call into Mr. Bostwick's hands, and favour his acceptance of it; but that they would also come to some decision respecting the different versions of the book of Psalms, which had so long divided and agitated the congregation. They urged, that the continuance of this controversy would be likely to discourage any minister from settling among them, and to prove highly injurious, in many respects, to the interests of religion: but at

brethren in the ministry, and the churches in general. His appearance and deportment were peculiarly venerable; as a preacher, he possessed an impressive commanding eloquence, to which few attain; and the ardour of his piety, together with the apostolic purity of his life, gave him a strong hold on public esteem. During his residence in Jamaica, he rejected several calls to other churches; and was with great difficulty persuaded by his friends, that it was his duty to remove to New York.

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the same time the memorial expressed an earnest desire that the use of Dr. Watts's version might be continued, as much more agreeable than any other to a great majority of the people.

The committee being divided with respect both to the call, and the question concerning psalmody, and believing that a decision of the latter question had not been committed to them by the Synod, determined to refer the decision of both questions to the regular commission of Synod, which they requested the moderator of that body, who happened to be one of their own number, to call as soon as convenient. The commission of Synod was accordingly convened at Princeton, on the 14th day of April, 1756; when the call was put into Mr. Bostwick's hands; and he, having declared himself wholly at a loss whether it was his duty to accept or reject it, the commission, after a full hearing of the persons appointed to represent the congregations of New York and Jamaica, respectively, decided in favour of his removal to New York. In this decision Mr. Bostwick acquiesced; and his pastoral relation to the church of Jamaica was thereupon dissolved.

Mr. Bostwick shortly after removed his family to the city, and entered on his new charge. Possessing pulpit talents superior to most of his brethren, he was a very popular preacher; and his piety and prudence, which were no less conspicuous, rendered him highly acceptable to the people of his charge, and to the city in general. The result of this choice proved as favourable as the most sanguine expectations of its friends.

Still, however, a small part of the congregation remained incurably dissatisfied with the system of psalmody which the majority chose to adopt, and

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with some other grounds of smaller, but serious, uneasiness. On these subjects the minority made their final application to the Synod, which met in the month of September, 1755. This application, in the judgment of the Synod, was made in terms by no means delicate: accordingly, that body, after a gentle animadversion on the offensiveness of the manner adopted by the applicants, referred them to their previous decisions on the subjects in question, which they saw no reason to rescind or alter. This answer being considered as final, a number of the dissatisfied brethren withdrew, formed themselves into a separate congregation, and made application for supplies to two ministers who had recently arrived from Scotland, and who belonged to one of the branches of the Secession from the establishment in that country. After some time, this newly formed society gave a call to the Rev. John Mason, of Scotland, to be their minister.* Mr. Mason accepted the call, and arrived

* The Rev. John Mason, D. D., was born at Mid Calder, near Edinburgh, in the year 1734. He was connected with that branch of the secession in Scotland known by the name of Antiburghers. By a Presbytery in that connexion, he was licensed, and not long afterwards ordained, with a view to his taking the pastoral charge of a congregation in New York; where he arrived, as above stated, in June, 1761, and where he was in a short time thereafter, installed. Dr. Mason was a man of a sound, strong mind, of extensive learning, and of unusually fervent piety. His scholarship was rare. He had so habituated himself to classical studies, that, at the age of twenty, he spoke the Latin language, on all the higher subjects of discourse, such as history, philosophy, and theology, with equal ease, and greater elegance, than his mother tongue. In Greek his proficiency was but little inferior; and he was familiar with the Hebrew. At the age of twenty-four, he taught Logic and Moral Philosophy, with reputation, in the

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in New York in the month of June, 1761. He immediately entered on the duties of his new station. And although his congregation was, at first, small and feeble, to a discouraging degree; yet, under the smiles of the great Head of the Church on his pre-eminently judicious and faithful ministrations, it soon rose to respectability and importance.

This secession restored peace to the parent church. Such of the dissatisfied brethren as did not choose to withdraw, sat down quietly under

Theological Seminary of the Antiburghers, at Abernethy. His lectures were in Latin.—As a preacher, he was uncommonly judicious and instructive; as a pastor, singularly faithful and diligent; and as a friend and companion, he displayed an assemblage of excellencies rarely found in so great a degree in one person. Few ministers have ever lived in New York, in so high esteem, or died so generally and deeply lamented. He left the world "in the calm sunshine of gospel hope," on the 19th day of April, 1799. Dr. Rodgers was much attached to this excellent man; and considered his intimacy with him as one of the greatest social privileges of his life. He seldom mentioned his name without expressions of respect and affection of the most pointed and tender kind. The following testimony of regard from the pen of the late Rev. Dr. Linn, who knew Dr. Mason well, and who was capable of appreciating his character, is worthy of being transcribed. "I shall be excused here in paying a small tribute of respect to the memory of a man who was my neighbour and my friend; whom I knew too late; and of whose value I was hardly sensible until I experienced his loss——He had prudence without cunning, cheerfulness without levity, dignity without pride, friendship without ceremony, charity without undue latitude, and religion without ostentation. The congregation which he served have erected a handsome monument to his memory, but the most honourable monument, is the place he holds in their hearts, and the lasting esteem of all who knew him."—*Signs of the Times*, p. 143, *note*.

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Mr. Bostwick's ministry, which was soon blessed to the increase and prosperity of the congregation.

In 1756, about the time of the secession above stated, the congregation met with a serious loss in the withdrawing of a single member. Mr. John Noble, a native of England, and a man of eminent piety, had been for many years an active and useful member of the church, and about four years before, had been chosen and set apart as one of its ruling elders. In this office his activity and usefulness were both increased. His great wealth enabled him to do more than most others; and he promised to be a rich blessing to the church. But, amidst these favourable prospects, in the year above mentioned, he left the Presbyterian church, and joined the Moravians, or United Brethren. The circumstances which led to this change of sentiment, and of religious connexion are now unknown. It is believed that an occasional visit to Bethlehem paved the way, or at least was not without its influence. However this may be, his secession in the then divided and comparatively enfeebled state of the church, was a serious loss; and laid the foundation of the society of United Brethren in the city of New York.

In the year 1759, the officers of the church made application, a third time, for a charter. To this step they were encouraged by several circumstances, which appeared favourable to their design, particularly by the declarations of Mr. Delancey, the lieutenant-governor, who then held the reins of administration, and who had frequently expressed his abhorrence of the illiberal and unjust refusal which their former applications had met. But, notwithstanding every favourable appearance, so zealous and persevering was the opposition made

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by the Episcopal church, that the applicants were, a third time, defeated.

This disappointment, in not obtaining a charter, was the more serious, because, about this time, some circumstances occurred which showed not only the great inconvenience, but also the solid loss which they sustained, in consequence of the legal disability thence arising. In the year 1756, Capt. Jeremiah Owen, a native of England, who had long been an exemplary member of the Presbyterian church in New York, died, and left a legacy of seven hundred and fifty dollars, the interest of which he directed to be applied annually toward the instruction of poor children of that congregation, in reading, writing, and the use of figures. The gentlemen named as executors by Capt. Owen in his will declined to act, for reasons now unknown, letters of administration, with the will annexed, were granted to Rebecca Shourt and Gabriel Ludlow, of whom the latter was the acting administrator. He was a member of the Episcopal church. This legacy, of course, with the other portions of the testator's estate, came into Mr. Ludlow's hands. The gentlemen who were in the habit of managing the temporal concerns of the Presbyterian church, called soon afterward on Mr. Ludlow, and requested the payment of the money. He declined complying with their request, alleging that, as the church was not incorporated, no person or body of persons could legally receive the legacy, or give him a discharge for the same. The applicants, not knowing how to remove this difficulty, suspended the prosecution of their claim until some more favourable opportunity might arise.

In the mean time, the vestry of Trinity church,

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being informed of the legacy, and that the trustees of the Presbyterian church had applied for it in vain, made every effort to get it out of Mr. Ludlow's hands, and appropriate it to their own use. They entreated, remonstrated, and threatened, but without success. Mr. Ludlow declared that, although he was a zealous Episcopalian, yet, as the money was committed to him in trust, and for a very different purpose, they should never possess it, unless they took it from him by force. Finding his honesty and honour too inflexible to admit the hope of getting the legacy into their hands, the vestry next proposed to Mr. Ludlow that he should send those children, the expense of whose education the interest of the legacy would defray, to their charity school, where they might be instructed at the ordinary rate. But this proposal also Mr. Ludlow pointedly rejected, observing, that Capt. Owen was a Presbyterian, of long standing, and of known principles; and that, although he had not mentioned it, or made it one of the conditions in his will, it doubtless was his intention, that the children instructed by means of his legacy, should be educated in the Presbyterian faith, and attend the Presbyterian church: whereas, if the proposal of the vestry were accepted, the children instructed at their school must, of necessity, attend their church. The members of the vestry appointed to conduct this negotiation, by way of answer to these remarks, asked him, somewhat tartly, "Are you not a churchman, sir?" "Yes," he replied, "I am a churchman; but I am also an honest man, and am determined to fulfil the intention of Capt. Owen to the best of my knowledge and ability."

The vestry at length, despairing of success,

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abandoned the pursuit of this legacy; and it remained a number of years in Mr. Ludlow's hands. This gentleman, however, with characteristic probity and honour, though he could not pay it to any corporation, nor to any body of persons entitled by law to receive it, determined to employ it, while in his hands, most rigidly in conformity with the will of the testator. He was, therefore, in the habit, for ten years, of selecting poor Presbyterian children, placing them under the care of Presbyterian school-masters, and defraying the expenses of their instruction with the avails of this legacy. Things continued in this state until the year 1765, when Mr. Rodgers became the pastor of the church; and when the bequest of Capt. Owen was destined to become the foundation of an important charity-school establishment.*

In the year 1762, Capt. John Neilson† bequeathed, by will, "to the Presbyterian church in New York," the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars. Soon after his death, which occurred in the same year, the trustees called on his acting

* Soon after the appearance of the first edition of this memoir, the above statement respecting Capt. Owen's legacy, and some other passages in the memoir, were warmly assailed, and their correctness denied, by the Rev. Thomas Y. How, D. D., then one of the ministers of Trinity Church, New York. The author only thinks proper to say that he has not considered Dr. How's representations as calling for the retraction or modification of a sentence which he had written, excepting in a single instance of no importance.

† Capt. Neilson was a native of Ireland, and for a number of years a respectable member of the Presbyterian church in New York. He commanded a merchant ship, in the European trade, in which he was blown up on the coast of France, in the year above mentioned, and with his whole crew, perished.

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executor, Mr. Waddell Cunningham, for the payment of the legacy. The answer of Mr. Cunningham was, that the law knew no such body as the "Presbyterian church in New York," and that the money would not be paid. The trustees, conscious that they had no power to compel payment, quietly submitted to the insult, as well as the injustice which attended the refusal. Nor was the money paid until more than twenty years afterwards, when the congregation having obtained a charter, a gentleman who had been connected in trade with Mr. Cunningham, offered to pay the principal sum, provided the trustees would relinquish the interest due thereon. This offer they thought proper to accept, and received the legacy accordingly.

The recurrence of such events as these rendered the trustees extremely anxious to obtain a charter; and they repeated their application for that purpose on every occasion which seemed to afford the least gleam of hope that they might succeed. But as often as they renewed their exertions, opposition was made from the old quarter, and always proved effectual.

The congregation, as yet, had no house of their own for the residence of their minister. In the month of May, 1762, they purchased a parsonage, and gave the use of it to Mr. Bostwick, as an addition to his stated salary. This property also, for want of a charter, they were obliged to convey to certain individuals, to be held in trust for the congregation.

Although Mr. Bostwick was highly acceptable and popular; yet, as his health was so delicate as to impair, in a considerable degree, his capacity for active service, the congregation judged an addi-

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tional minister to be necessary; and accordingly in the month of October, 1762, they gave a call to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Treat, a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, to become their pastor, in connexion with Mr. Bostwick. Mr. Treat accepted their call; and being without a pastoral charge, immediately entered on his ministry with them. He was a popular and useful preacher.

In the month of November, 1763, Mr. Bostwick was removed by death, after an illness of a few days. He was highly esteemed and revered, while he lived, not only by the people of his own charge, but by the churches, and his fellow-citizens in general; and his death was sincerely and justly lamented.

Mr. Treat survived Mr. Bostwick; but another minister being thought necessary, for a congregation so large and important, a call was voted, in the spring of the year 1764, to the Rev. Mr. John Murray, a preacher from the north of Ireland, and a man of popular talents, to be a colleague with Mr. Treat. But the want of unanimity, together with some other considerations of a personal nature induced Mr. Murray to reject the call.

In the month of January, 1765, as before stated, the congregation gave a unanimous and affectionate call to the subject of this memoir. The circumstances and the result of this call, were detailed in a preceding chapter; and introduce us to that portion of the history of the church in New York, which is inseparably connected with the life of Mr. Rodgers, and which will be found detailed in the following chapters.*

* The foregoing history of the church of New York, is compiled from documents, which were prepared by Dr.

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CHAPTER V.

From his removal to the city of New York, till the commencement of the Revolutionary War.

Mr. Rodgers arrived in New York, as before stated, to enter on his pastoral duties there, on the 24th day of July, 1765. He was received by the people of his new charge with great respect and affection; and with no less cordiality by the Presbytery of New York, which convened at Springfield, New Jersey, on the 20th of August, for the purpose of receiving him, and appointed his installation to take place on the 4th day of September following. In the installation solemnities the Rev. Timothy Johnes, of Morristown, the oldest member of the Presbytery, presided, and the Rev. James Caldwell, of Elizabethtown, preached the sermon. Mr. Rodgers often spoke of that day, as one in which the tenderest regrets for the people he had recently left, and the most grateful affection for the marked kindness and attachment of those to whose service he then devoted himself, produced a singular conflict in his mind.

Formed for activity, and prompted to diligence in his appropriate functions, as well by temperament and habit, as by a strong sense of duty, Mr. Rodgers immediately transferred to the new sphere of action in which it had pleased God to place him,

Rodgers himself, and put into the hands of the writer of this volume, several years before his decease. On this authority all the facts in the preceding chapter rest, excepting those for which some other is distinctly quoted; and excepting also the notes, for which the writer alone is responsible.

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the ardent zeal, and the tender pastoral anxieties and assiduities, which he had long displayed toward another flock. The disadvantage arising from the material difference, in several respects, between a country and city charge, was soon surmounted by him: or rather, happy in a style of manners peculiarly adapted to a polished and populous city, he at once found himself at home as pastor of the church in New York.

He had not been many weeks in this new station, before he began to direct to the catechetical instruction of the children, and young people under his care, the same particular and unwearied attention, which he had found so beneficial in St. George's. Besides collecting the younger children, once a week, and hearing them recite the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, accompanied with prayer, and an extemporaneous exhortation, as before, he instituted a more public lecture on the same catechism, which was held on Thursday evening in each week, designed for the instruction of the elder classes of children; but which was generally attended by as many, of all ages, as could be accommodated in the building in which it was held. These two services he continued, with persevering diligence, until within a few years of his decease; when his growing infirmities compelled him to yield them to his colleagues. He had a deep impression of the importance of catechetical instruction; which he embraced every opportunity of endeavouring to urge, especially on his younger brethren in the ministry. And he often declared that, as far as he was able to judge, the familiar, but systematic, doctrinal instruction, accompanied with a warm practical application, which he always aimed to give in his Thursday

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evening lectures, had been more signally blessed to the spiritual benefit of his people, than any other part of his ministrations.

Mr. Rodgers also encouraged the establishment of private associations for prayer, in different parts of the congregation, which accordingly, soon after his arrival in New York, were considerably multiplied, and which he countenanced by his presence, as often as his numerous engagements permitted. A short time previous to the decease of Mr. Bostwick, the means of grace had been attended with a more than common blessing in the congregation; and although this partial revival had, in some measure, declined, previous to Mr. Rodgers's arrival, still a portion of its happy influence remained; so that the minds of the people were, in a considerable degree, prepared to give a favourable reception to any proposals which had for their object the promotion of Christian knowledge and piety. This circumstance both facilitated the introduction, and was, no doubt, a means of contributing to the efficacy, of those new plans and labours for the advancement of religion, to which Mr. Rodgers's settlement in New York gave rise.

These plans and labours were crowned with success. By the divine blessing upon them a considerable revival of religion almost immediately ensued. The congregation rapidly increased. The assemblies for the worship of God were crowded. Many were awakened to serious thoughtfulness; and a large number were brought, as was hoped, to a saving knowledge of the truth.

In the course of the family visitations which Mr. Rodgers early commenced, and for many years faithfully maintained, he discovered a number of poor children, belonging to the congrega-

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tion, who were growing up without any suitable education, and without the means of obtaining it. He immediately reported their cases to the officers of the church, and inquired whether there were no practicable means of putting such children to school, and preparing them for usefulness in life. The church officers informed him of Capt. Owen's legacy;* of the exertions which had been made to obtain and apply it, according to the will of the testator; and of the circumstances in which it was then placed. Mr. Rodgers, with that ardour and promptness for which he was remarkable, went immediately to Mr. Ludlow, and made a new and urgent application for the payment of the legacy, Mr. Ludlow, in the same spirit which he had always manifested, assured him, that he had long been desirous to be able to put the money in question lawfully and safely out of his hands; that he was still so; and that if any method could be devised of applying it to the object which Capt. Owen had in view, and of indemnifying himself, he should most cordially consent to its adoption. After repeated conferences on the subject, Mr. Ludlow at length agreed to pay the legacy to the treasurer of the church, provided six of the principal members of the congregation would give him a bond of indemnity against all future claimants. This method of accommodation was adopted; the bond was given, and the money paid, in the year 1766. The gentlemen who had given the bond,† immediately invested, and began to apply the legacy, in

* See the preceding chapter, page 119.

† These gentlemen were selected by Mr. Ludlow himself, and were the following, Peter Van Brugh Livingston, William Livingston, William Smith, John Morin Scott, Alexander McDougall, and Joseph Hallett.

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such manner as they judged most conformable to its benevolent design.

When Mr. Rodgers entered on his pastoral charge in New York, he found several customs established in the church, which by no means met his approbation. Among these, was the practice of making the introductory prayer in public worship, reading the Scriptures, and giving out the first psalm, from the clerk's desk, instead of the pulpit. This had been, for many years, a subject of complaint with a portion of the congregation; but a majority being in favour of the practice, it had been continued. Mr. Rodgers, without consulting the eldership, determined, on his own responsibility, to lay it aside, and to perform the whole service in the pulpit; which he did ever afterwards. This measure created some dissatisfaction, for a time, among a few leading members of the church; but such were the popularity and success of his ministrations, and such his influence among the people, that the unpleasant feelings expressed on the occasion, by these individuals, were but little regarded by the body of the congregation, and soon entirely ceased to be manifested.

Mr. Rodgers had not been many months in New York, when it was found, that his labours had been so much blessed to the increase of the congregation, both in numbers, and in zeal, that it was necessary to erect a new place of worship. Measures were accordingly taken for this purpose, early in the spring of the year 1766. A lot of ground, at the corner of Beekman and Nassau streets, was procured, from the corporation of the city, on a perpetual lease. The foundation of a new church was laid in the autumn of the same year. The work was prosecuted with vigour;

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and in about fifteen months the edifice was completed.

As Mr. Rodgers, by his popular and unwearied pastoral labours, had been the means of rendering this enterprise necessary; so his ardent and indefatigable zeal in promoting its success, was equally conspicuous, and worthy of being recorded. He went from door to door, for several months, soliciting subscriptions, with a patience and perseverance which ought never to be forgotten by those who take an interest in the history of the Presbyterian Church in New York.* A large part of the funds employed in erecting the edifice in question, were collected by his hands; and no inconsiderable portion of them obtained by the weight of his professional character.

This new church was opened for public worship

* The subject of this memoir often related little anecdotes concerning the unexpected repulses, on the one hand, and the agreeable surprises on the other, which occurred in the course of this begging season. One, of the latter class, shall serve as a specimen. Mr. Rodgers, attended by an officer of the church, called, one morning, in his soliciting tour, at the house of an excellent woman, a widow, who had recently lost by death a pious and beloved daughter. As her circumstances were narrow, little was expected from her. Indeed they called upon her chiefly to testify their respect, and to avoid the imputation of either forgetting her person, or despising her mite. To their great surprise, however, when their errand was made known, she presented to them, with much promptness and cordiality, a sum which, for her, was very large; so large, indeed, that they felt and expressed some scruples about accepting it. She put an end to their scruples by saying, with much decision: "You must take it all; I had laid it up as a portion for my daughter; and I am determined that He who has my daughter shall have her portion too."

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on the first day of January, 1768. The first sermon was preached in it by Mr. Rodgers, from Haggai ii. 7. The pews were all immediately taken; and it soon became abundantly evident, that the erection of an additional church was neither unnecessary nor premature. The congregation, though now worshipping in two buildings, was still considered as one body. The ministers preached alternately in each; and there was but one board of trustees, and one eldership, for the whole.

In the beginning of the year 1766, when the erection of a new church was resolved upon, it was judged expedient to make another attempt to obtain a charter. The inconveniences resulting from the want of it were found daily to accumulate; and it was distinctly perceived that the enterprise at that time in prospect, would serve to multiply them still further. Sir Henry Moore, then governor of the province, was friendly to the object of the applicants; but a doubt being started, whether his commission invested him with incorporating powers; and there being some reason to fear that a favourable decision on the part of the council could not be depended on; the officers of the church determined at once to approach the throne with their request. Accordingly, in the month of March, 1766, a petition to the King was drawn up, and signed by the ministers, elders, deacons, and trustees, exhibiting the circumstances of the case; stating the grievances under which the church had long laboured; and praying for a charter of incorporation. This petition was presented by the agents in London, who were employed for the purpose. The King laid it before his privy council; and they referred it, according

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to the usual routine of such business, to the board of trade. That board, (of which Lord Dartmouth, a sincere friend to the application, was then president,) wrote to Sir Henry Moore, to know "whether the facts stated in the petition," of which he was furnished with a copy, "were true." This brought the business before the governor's council in New York, who, after every possible delay, were obliged to report, that "the facts stated in the petition were all true." Their answer was forwarded, by the governor, to Lord Dartmouth, without loss of time: but when the subject afterwards came before the board of trade, the Bishop of London appeared twice before the board, and zealously opposed the application. Their report to the King was unfavourable; and the petition was finally rejected on the 26th day of August, 1767. On receiving notice of this rejection, the congregation vested the title to the new church and cemetery, in private trustees, as they had before been obliged to do with respect to their parsonage house.

But amidst all these discouragements, the church continued to increase in numbers and strength, and religion prospered. The number of new communicants added, about this time, was greater than at any period before, or for many years afterwards. And it is probable that the very means by which the miserable calculators of this world thought to oppress, to dishearten, and perhaps to destroy; were made instrumental, by a sovereign and gracious God, to bind together, to build up, and to inspire with a more ardent zeal.

Soon after Mr. Rodgers removed to New York, the controversy respecting an American Episcopate was at its greatest height. The leading Episco-

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palians of the American colonies, were exceedingly zealous, and had taken unwearied pains, by application to the spiritual lords, and other persons of influence in Great Britain, to secure the establishment of diocesan bishops in this country. This plan being regarded, by the non-episcopal inhabitants of the colonies,* as highly dangerous to their ecclesiastical liberties, they determined, by all fair and honourable means, to oppose it. Their opposition was firm, persevering, and successful. The friends of the Episcopate, notwithstanding all the zeal and exertions which they employed in its behalf, were continually disappointed by difficulties and delay, until the Revolution; which, by establishing the independence of the United States, effectually precluded the dangers apprehended from

* The opposition to an American Episcopate was not confined to non-episcopalians. Some zealous members of the Episcopal Church, and even some ministers of that denomination had the wisdom to perceive, and the magnanimity to acknowledge, the dangers likely to arise from this measure. Among the latter were the Rev. Mr. Gwatkin, and the Rev. Mr. Henley, Episcopal clergymen of Virginia, who openly opposed the plan, and wrote against it. They both protested against it in the ecclesiastical convention of that colony, in 1771; and afterwards the former published a pamphlet with the same view, under the following title: "A Letter to the clergy of New York and New Jersey, occasioned by an address to the Episcopalians in Virginia. By the Rev. Thomas Gwatkin, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, in William and Mary College." Williamsburgh, 1772, 4to. pp. 28. The Rev. Mr. Bland, and the Rev. Mr. Hewitt, also Episcopal clergymen in Virginia, appeared on the same side. For their conduct in this affair, they were very much hated and persecuted by the clergy of their own denomination; but they received the thanks of the house of burgesses of Virginia. See Pennsylvania Gazette, August 8, 1771.

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their scheme; removed the fears of their opponents and terminated the controversy.

Among the measures which were taken for defeating the plan of an American Episcopate, and for keeping the non-episcopal churches awake to their interests and dangers, was the appointment of a general convention, to compare opinions and concert plans, for the promotion of these objects. This convention was formed of delegates from the Synod of the Presbyterian Church, and from the several Associations of Connecticut. The objects toward which its counsels were directed, to use its own language, were, "to gain information of the public state of the united cause and interest; to collect accounts relating thereto; to unite endeavours and counsels for spreading the gospel, and preserving the religious liberties of our churches; to diffuse harmony, and keep up a correspondence, throughout the united body; and with our friends abroad, to recommend, cultivate, and preserve, loyalty and allegiance to the king's majesty; and also to address the king, and the king's ministers, from time to time, with assurances of the unshaken loyalty of the pastors comprehended in this union, and the churches under their care, and to vindicate them, if unjustly aspersed."*

This convention first met at Elizabethtown, in New Jersey, November 5th, 1766; and continued to meet annually, sometimes within the bounds of the Synod, and sometimes in Connecticut, until the year 1775, when its meetings became unnecessary, and were discontinued. Mr. Rodgers was always one of the delegates from the Synod of the

* MS. Records of the Convention, in the hands of Ebenezer Hazard, Esq., of Philadelphia.

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Presbyterian Church, and an active member of the convention. This circumstance, while it evinced the high confidence which his brethren reposed in his fidelity and wisdom, introduced him to a very general and honourable acquaintance with the clergy of the American colonies,* and also gave him the best opportunity of exhibiting that ardent attachment to civil and religious liberty, which distinguished his character, and pervaded his life.

The following extracts from a letter addressed by this convention, to the dissenting committee in England, will serve, at once, to show the spirit of those times, and to rescue from misrepresentation the conduct of some great and good men, who had then much influence in the ecclesiastical concerns of America.

"This we have apprehended to be our duty, especially in our present circumstances; not only that we might strengthen our influence in suppressing or discouraging any measures that might be fallen upon by the people committed to our care, that would be inconsistent with our character as peaceable and loyal subjects, or detrimental to the public peace and tranquillity; but also that we might, as faithful officers in the Church of Christ, watch over her rights and privileges, and endeavour more effectually to prevent any attempts of any other denomination of Christians to oppress us. The late attempts of the Episcopalian missionaries among us to introduce an American Episcopate,

* As a member of the Convention, he was not only associated with such men as Dr. Francis Allison, Dr. Patrick Allison, Dr. Macwhorter, and a number of other distinguished clergymen of the Presbyterian Church, but also with some of the most eminent clergymen of New England.

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have given a very just and general alarm to our churches, who fled from the unmerciful rigour and persecutions of diocesan bishops in our mother country, to settle in an uncultivated wilderness. The recollection of the cruelties and hardships which our fathers suffered before this peaceful retreat was opened for us, fills our minds with an utter abhorrence of every species of ecclesiastical tyranny and persecution, and therefore we would guard with special care against admitting any just suspicion that we would suffer that to take place among ourselves which we so much condemn in others.

"We oppose not, therefore, the introduction of diocesan bishops in America, from any apprehension that we have any exclusive privileges above others, or from any right we have to endeavour to prevent them from enjoying the same liberty with any other denomination of Christians in the colonies. We oppose the scheme from very different motives and principles. Our fears would not be so much alarmed, could any rational method be devised for sending over bishops among us, stripped of every degree of civil power, and confined in the exercise of their ecclesiastical functions to their own society; and could we have sufficient security that the British Parliament that would send them over, thus limited, to gain a peaceable settlement here, would never be induced by their complaints for the want of power, to enlarge it at any future period. But it is very evident that it is not that harmless and inoffensive bishop which is designed for us, or which the missionaries among us request; and therefore we cannot but be apprehensive of danger from the proposed episcopate, however plausible the scheme may be represented.

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We all know the jealousy of the bishops in England concerning their own power and dignity suffering by the example of such a limited bishop in America, and we also know the force of a British act of Parliament, and have reason to dread the establishment of bishops' courts among us. Should they claim the right of holding these courts, and of exercising the powers belonging to their office by the common law of England, (which is esteemed the birth-right of a British subject,) we could have no counterbalance to this enormous power in our colonies, where we have no nobility or proper courts to check the dangerous exertions of their authority, and when our governors and judges may be the needy dependents of a prime minister, and therefore afraid to disoblige a person who is sure of being supported by the whole bench of bishops in England. So that our civil liberties appear to us to be in imminent danger from such an establishment. We have so long tasted the sweets of civil and religious liberty, that we cannot be easily prevailed upon to submit to a yoke of bondage, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear."*

But besides acting as a member of this convention, Mr. Rodgers was associated with a band of worthies in the city of New York, who were firm friends to the same cause, and who made a number of useful publications on the impolicy and dangers of an American episcopate, and on subjects connected therewith. Of this number were the Rev. Doctors Laidlie† and Mason, with William Living-

* MS. records of the Convention.

† The Rev. Archibald Laidlie, D. D., was a native of Scotland. He had accepted a call to the Dutch church of Flushing, in Zealand, and had been four years the pastor of that church when he was called to the city of New

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ston,* William Smith,† and John Morin Scott,‡ esquires, who were vigilant observers of the course of public affairs, and who did much to awaken and direct the public mind at that interesting period. Though the subject of this memoir did not himself make any large publication at that time, yet he published some smaller pieces, which were considered as useful, and constantly aided by his influence and his counsels the cause in which he was engaged.

In 1768, Mr. Rodgers had the degree of Doctor of Divinity conferred on him, by the University of Edinburgh. Academic honours of this kind have become so common at the present day, that their value, even in public opinion, is much reduced. But this was by no means the case at the date of the event in question. At that time, considerable advancement in age, and more than usual elevation and weight of character, were deemed

York, where he arrived in 1764. He was the first minister of the Dutch church in America who officiated in the English language. He was a man of distinguished talents, of respectable learning, and of ardent piety. As a preacher, he was evangelical, powerful, popular, and successful to an uncommon degree, and, as a pastor, indefatigably faithful. His ministry was greatly blessed to the Dutch church in New York. He died at Red Hook, in 1778, while an exile from the city on account of the revolutionary war. Probably no minister ever lived in New York more honoured, or more useful, or died more universally regretted, than Dr. Laidlie.

* Afterwards Governor of New Jersey, whose character and writings are well known.

† The historian of New York, and an eminent counsellor at law; who died, a few years ago, Chief Justice of Canada.

‡ A counsellor at law, of much eloquence, wit, and influence, at that period.

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indispensable requisites for meriting this degree. The circumstances, also, attending this tribute of respect from a foreign University, were honourable to its object. It was as unexpected, as it had been altogether unsolicited by him. Mr. Whitefield being then in London, and wishing a public honour of this nature to be conferred on his American friend, communicated his wish to Dr. Franklin, who was also in London at the same time. Dr. Franklin, at the request of Mr. Whitefield, immediately wrote to Dr. Robertson, principal of the University of Edinburgh, giving Mr. Rodgers such a character as he thought proper, and requesting for him, from that university, the degree of doctor in divinity. Dr. Robertson immediately took measures for complying with this request. The degree was conferred. And in a few weeks Dr. Franklin received the official testimonial of the fact, which he sent to Mr. Whitefield, and which was by him transmitted to Mr. Rodgers. The diploma bore date, December 20th, 1768, and reached the hands of Mr. Rodgers in the following April, in the forty-second year of his age.

The gradual depreciation of the value of honorary degrees in later times, and especially in our own country, may be ascribed to a variety of causes:—to the multiplication of colleges in the United States, beyond the necessities of the country, and beyond its power of efficient support; each of which colleges deems itself bound to continue the habit of annually bestowing its honours; to the great increase of the number of those, in proportion to the mass of society, who pass through a collegiate course, and receive the first collegiate laurels, by which their ambition is excited to seek after those of a higher grade: and, perhaps, in

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some measure, to the prevailing plan of government adopted in colleges on this side of the Atlantic. But to whatever causes it may be ascribed, the fact itself is unquestionable; and is chargeable, it is believed, in a greater degree, on the colleges of America, than on any others in the world. What a contrast between that state of public sentiment, and public habit, which permitted President Dickinson, President Burr, President Edwards, President Davies, the apostolic Tennents, Mr. Whitefield, and a long catalogue of similar men, to descend to their graves without a Doctorate; and that which now lavishes the title on juvenility, on ignorance, and on weakness, with a frequency altogether unworthy of the dispensers of literary honours! And although the venerable subject of this memoir, received his education, his habits, and his clerical title, in the better days of literary administration, if the expression may be allowed, yet it must be owned, that his great benevolence and urbanity too often prompted him, when called to act as one of the guardians of literature, to concur in that system of facility and yielding on this subject, which has so much reduced the value of Academic honours.*

* The practice of conferring the honours of literary institutions on individuals of distinguished erudition, commenced in the twelfth century; when the Emperor Lothaire, having found in Italy a copy of the Roman law, ordained that it should be publicly expounded in the schools; and that he might give encouragement to the study, he further ordered, that the public professors of this law should be dignified with the title of Doctors. The first person created a Doctor, after this ordinance of the Emperor, was Bulgarus Hugolinus, who was greatly distinguished for his learning, and literary labours. Not long afterwards the practice of creating doctors was borrowed

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In the summer of 1768, the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon reached America, and took charge of the college at Princeton, to the presidency of which he had been called a short time before. Dr. Rodgers was among the first to do honour to the talents, learning, and piety of this eminent stranger; and was always ranked among his most respectful and affectionate friends. In 1769, he accompanied Dr. Witherspoon on a visit to Boston, and other parts of New England, where they spent some weeks; and where they were received and treated with the most gratifying distinction and respect. This journey was exceedingly interesting to both. It introduced them to a new, and highly valued circle of friends; and furnished matter for pleasing reflection, and entertaining anecdote, to the end of life. Few men were ever more free from feelings of envy and jealousy than Dr. Rodgers. He had the discernment to perceive, and the magnanimity to acknowledge, intellectual and literary superiority wherever it existed; and was unfeignedly gratified with the public honours received and enjoyed

from the lawyers by divines, who, in their schools, publicly taught divinity, and conferred degrees on those who had made great proficiency in this science. The plan of conferring degrees in divinity was first adopted in the universities of Bologna, Oxford, and Paris. See Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana, B. iv. p. 134. It is remarkable that the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson when he had become eminent in literature, could not obtain the degree of Master of Arts, from Trinity college, Dublin, though powerful interest was made in his behalf, for this purpose, by Mr. Pope, Lord Gower, and others. Instances of the failure of applications of a similar kind, made in favour of characters still more distinguished than Johnson then was, are also on record. So cautious and reserved were literary institutions, a little more than half a century ago, in bestowing their honours!

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by such superior minds. His intercourse with Dr. Witherspoon was a striking exemplification of this part of his character. That distinguished president of Nassau Hall, had, probably, one of the most sound and vigorous minds of the age in which he lived; and in every company, or deliberative body, in which he appeared, his superiority was apparent.* Yet no man ever perceived in Dr. Rodgers the smallest uneasiness at the fame

* Dr. John Witherspoon was a native of Scotland, where he was born, February 5th, 1722. He was lineally descended from John Knox, the eminent reformer. He received his education in the university of Edinburgh, which he left, after completing his studies in the Theological Hall, at the age of twenty-one. From that period, until his arrival in America, he devoted himself to the work of the gospel ministry, first at Beith, and afterwards at Paisley. Whether we consider this great man as a divine, a statesman, or the head of a literary institution, his talents and usefulness were pre-eminent. Many men have had greater brilliancy of genius, and greater variety and extent of learning; but scarcely any man ever possessed more sound practical wisdom, more comprehensive views, or a mass of information better selected, or more thoroughly digested, than he. His works will do him honour, as long as piety, orthodoxy, good sense, and profound discussion of truth and duty shall be esteemed among men. He was the first person in Great Britain who published the leading doctrine relating to the illustration of the powers of the human mind, on the principles of common sense, afterwards so largely and successfully developed by Dr. Reid and others. It is asserted, by competent judges, that an essay in the Scot's Magazine, by Dr. Witherspoon, published several years before Dr. Reid had given any thing to the world on the subject, distinctly exhibits the grand doctrine for which the latter has received so much praise. And it is certain that Dr. Witherspoon himself, whose temper was very remote from vanity or arrogance, always laid claim to the honour of being, in a sort, the discoverer of that doctrine

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and honours of his illustrious friend; though, amidst the intercourse of many years, he was often called to witness them. On the contrary, he was ever among the most forward to confess his superior powers, and to promote his merited reputation. He cultivated towards him the most affectionate friendship, and took pleasure in acting with him, as long as they both lived.

At the meeting of the Synod, in 1774, Dr. Rodgers was appointed to spend a number of weeks in the summer and autumn of that year, on a missionary tour, through the northern, and north-western parts of the province of New York. He accordingly devoted several months to that service, itinerating and preaching the gospel with unwearied zeal and assiduity; for the most part in places utterly destitute of the means of grace; generally with great acceptance; and in a number of instances, with the most gratifying success. His labours, in the course of that mission, were the immediate or remote means of forming many churches, which have since proved large, flourishing, and happy.

The period in which the Doctor fulfilled this mission, was the period rendered memorable by the warm dispute between the settlers in the territory which is now Vermont, and the government of New York, which claimed that territory as lying within its jurisdiction. Measures of great decision, and even violence, had been taken by both parties, a short time before he went into that country; so that he found the public mind, particularly in Vermont, highly irritated and inflamed. Nothing was further from his view than any political design; but some of the jealous and exasperated Vermonters, knowing that he came from the capital of New York, and connecting every thing

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with the existing dispute, suspected him of being engaged in some mission or plan unfriendly to their claims. In a particular town, which he had entered, by appointment, for the sole purpose of preaching, he observed, a little before the public service began, several rough and fierce looking men approach the house in which he was about to preach, and enter into very earnest, and apparently, angry conversation with those who were near the door. He was utterly ignorant, at the time, of their design, or of the subject of their conversation; but was afterwards informed, that they were very warmly contending with his friend, that he was a spy, and, of course, a very dangerous character, and that he ought to be immediately arrested. It was in vain that the friends of the Doctor remonstrated, on the ground of the sacredness of his office, and the solemnity of the duty in which he was about to engage, and to attend on which the people were then collecting. His angry accusers replied, that the more sacred his office, the greater his power of doing mischief; and that to let him escape would be treason to their cause. At length, finding that all they could say availed nothing to his exculpation, and that the most positive assurances of his being known to be a man of pious and exemplary character, only rendered these hostile and ardent spirits more determined in their original purpose, the friends of the Doctor only begged them to delay the seizure of his person until after divine service should be closed, as it would be a pity to disappoint so large a congregation as had then assembled for public worship. To this proposal, after much persuasion, they reluctantly consented, and divine service in a few moments began. The exercises were more than usu-

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ally solemn and impressive in their character; many of the congregation were in tears; and even those who had come into the assembly armed with so much resentment, were observed to be first serious, and then softened, with those around them. When the solemnities of worship were ended, they said nothing more about their plan of arresting the preacher; but quietly retired, and suffered him to pursue his journey. Before he left the house, however, in which he had preached, the owner of it, who had stood his firm friend in the contest, put him on his guard, by relating all that had passed.

Two or three days after this, while the Doctor was preaching in a more northern town, in the same district of country, soon after the public service began, he saw two men enter the assembly, marked with countenances of peculiar ferocity and rage. He afterwards learned that they had come from a southern town, under the same impressions and with the same views as their predecessors in violence. On entering the assembly, they seated themselves, resolving to wait until the service should be ended, and then to arrest the preacher. The exercises of the day, as in the former case, were the means of disarming them. When the benediction was pronounced, they withdrew, saying to each other, that they were probably mistaken in the man, and had better go home.

Those who are acquainted with the piety, the fervour, and the affection, which Dr. Rodgers habitually manifested in his public addresses, will feel no surprise at their producing such effects as these. No one could hear him without being impressed with the conviction that he was not acting a part, but that he was deeply in earnest; that he

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felt the importance of what he uttered; and that he was actuated by a tender concern for the temporal and eternal welfare of those whom he addressed. It is impossible, here, not to recollect the case of an infinitely greater than the subject of this memoir, by whose discourse the officers who had been sent to seize him were disarmed, and concerning whom they ingenuously said, on their return, "never man spake like this man."

In 1774, it was judged proper to make one more effort to obtain a charter for the church in New York. Governor Tryon being about to embark for Great Britain, in the autumn of that year, was made fully acquainted with all the steps which had been taken, at different times, for attaining this object, and also with all the distressing embarrassments and difficulties which had arisen from repeated disappointments. He professed to have a deep conviction of the injustice and impolicy of the treatment which the congregation had received in relation to this affair; and promised his best offices, when he should arrive in England, to promote the accomplishment of their wishes. On receiving from him declarations and assurances of this kind, that he might be furnished with a proper document to lay before the King and the Privy Council on the subject, a petition was formally presented to him, making suitable statements, and praying for a charter. Petitions of a similar nature were presented to the Governor from several Presbyterian congregations in different parts of the province, and also from several Low Dutch Reformed congregations. These petitions he took with him, and pursued the business intrusted to him with so much fidelity, that he actually obtain-

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ed an order from the King and Council to grant all the charters for which application had been made. On his return to New York, in the summer of 1775, he imparted this pleasing intelligence to the several petitioners; in consequence of which, the ministers, elders, deacons, and trustees of the Presbyterian church in the city, in compliance with a form which they were told was necessary, presented another petition to the Governor and council, accompanied with a draft of the charter for which they prayed. This petition was favourably received; the charter, as drafted, actually passed the council, and was put into the hands of Mr. Kemp, the King's attorney, to report thereon. The report of this officer was made necessary by the tenor of the royal order; but was, at the same time, considered as a mere formality, and a favourable report, as a thing of course, after the steps which had been taken. In this, however, the persons concerned were deceived. Neither the charter, nor his report upon it, could ever be gotten out of the attorney's hands. On one frivolous pretence or another he delayed from time to time, until the approach of the revolutionary struggle, which, while it rendered the congregation less solicitous about obtaining a charter, attracted and fixed their attention on other subjects.

Dr. Rodgers was an early and a decided friend to American Independence. When the contest between Great Britain and her colonies was drawing to a crisis, and it became evident that an appeal to the sword was unavoidable, he did not hesitate to take side with the latter; and was the uniform, zealous, and active advocate of his country's rights. A few of the principal members of

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his church took a different course ;* but a great majority of them decided and acted in concurrence with their pastor. For a considerable time before this crisis arrived, Dr. Rodgers, and several other clergymen of the city, among whom were Dr. Mason and Dr. Laidlie, had been in the habit of holding weekly meetings for cultivating friendship with each other, and for mutual instruction. Towards the close of 1775, the gentlemen concerned agreed to suspend their usual exercises at these meetings, and to employ the time, when they came together, in special prayer for a blessing upon the country, in the struggle on which it was entering. This meeting, thus conducted, was kept up until the ministers composing it, and the great mass of the people under their pastoral care, retired from the city, previous to the arrival of the British forces.

It being taken for granted, immediately after the commencement of hostilities with Great Britain, that gaining possession of New York would be one of the first and most favourite objects of that government; and the movements of the enemy soon beginning to confirm this expectation, a large part of the inhabitants of the city, not wishing either to join the British, or to lie at their mercy, thought proper to retire from the scene, and go into a vo-

* Among those members of the Presbyterian church in New York, who took the side of Great Britain in this contest, were Andrew Eliot, Esq., the collector of the port; William Smith, Esq., mentioned in a preceding page; James Jauncey, Esq., a gentleman of great wealth and respectability, and some others to whom Dr. Rodgers was greatly attached, and from whom he separated with pain. But, compared with the body of the congregation, the number of those who took this ground was extremely small

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luntary exile. The greater portion of those who took this course, left the city toward the close of the winter and in the spring of 1776. On the 29th of February, Dr. Rodgers removed his family to a place of retirement, in the neighbourhood of the city; where they remained during the months of March and April; and from which he found it convenient to visit the city, as often as his professional duties required.

On the 14th day of April, in that year, General Washington reached New York, and took possession of it for its defence. Soon after his arrival, Dr. Rodgers, in company with other friends of the American cause, waited on the General to pay him his respects. The General received him with pointed attention; and when he was about to retire, followed him to the door, and observed, that his name had been mentioned to him in Philadelphia, which he had just left, as a gentleman whose fidelity to the interest and liberties of the country might be relied on, and who might be capable of giving him important information: and added, "May I take the liberty, sir, to apply to you, with this view, whenever circumstances may render it desirable?" The Doctor, after assuring him of the readiness and pleasure with which he should render him, in the cause in which he was engaged, any service in his power, took his leave. It is not improper to add, that the General actually did consult the Doctor, on several occasions afterwards, concerning certain parts of the public service, and, particularly in one case, received from him important information. A number of letters passed between them, some of which were found among the Doctor's papers after his decease

In the month of May, 1776, the Doctor removed

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his family from the neighbourhood of New York to Greenfield, in Connecticut, as a place of more comfortable retirement and greater safety. About the same time, or a few weeks afterwards, the great body of his congregation left the city, and either joined the army, to render what aid they were able to the common cause, or took refuge in such parts of the adjacent country as were most secure from the incursions of the enemy. The Rev. Mr. Treat, his colleague, left the city about the same time.

It ought not to be omitted, that Dr. Rodgers, among the many points in which his conduct is worthy of remembrance and imitation, displayed, about this time, that tender filial affection, which might have been expected from his general character. A few years before the commencement of the revolutionary war, his father's house, in the city of Philadelphia, was consumed by fire, and his father perished in the flames. He immediately took his mother under his own roof, and, as long as she lived, displayed towards her all the unremitting attentions of the most dutiful son. He removed her, at the commencement of the war, into Connecticut, where she died, in the course of the next year, at a good old age, and after a life of exemplary piety.

A short time after the removal of Dr. Rodgers to New York, and more particularly after the public testimony of respect which he received from the University of Edinburgh, he was led, by a variety of circumstances, to commence a correspondence with several gentlemen of distinction, in Great Britain, which he maintained, until the commencement of hostilities interrupted the intercourse with that country; and which, with respect to most of them, he resumed and continued, after the restora-

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tion of peace. Among these gentlemen, were the Rev. Dr. Gillies, of Glasgow; the Rev. Dr. Gibbons, of London; the Rev. Dr. Price, of Hackney; and the Rev. Dr. Ryland, of Northampton. But among all his friends beyond the Atlantic, he prized the correspondence of none more than that of the Rev. Dr. Erskine, of Edinburgh, whose talents, learning, and fervent piety, rendered him eminent throughout Protestant Christendom. His epistolary intercourse with this venerable clergyman was constant and peculiarly affectionate, and continued till the death of Dr. Erskine, which took place seven or eight years before that of Dr. Rodgers.*

* An incident connected with the correspondence with Dr. Erskine, impressed the writer of these pages very forcibly at the time of its occurrence. When Dr. Rodgers received the news of the death of that excellent man, he was himself recovering from a severe illness, and was deeply affected with the intelligence. After some pious remarks, and a reference to the circumstance of Dr. Erskine's age and his own being nearly the same, he added, "I have now lost the last of my correspondents in Great Britain. I believe I must open a correspondence with Dr. Balfour, of Glasgow; as I do not wish to be without a friend on that side of the Atlantic, with whom I can occasionally exchange letters." The writer acknowledges that the first impression made on his mind by this remark, from the lips of a man of seventy-six or seventy-seven years of age, and then so feeble as not to be likely to live many months, was rather of the ludicrous kind. But a moment's reflection entirely removed this impression, and produced one of respect and admiration. It was the same firm, persevering, practical spirit, which had attended Dr. Rodgers through life, and had prompted him to so much active usefulness, which, on this occasion, led him, instead of giving up to inaction and languor, for the remainder of life, to go on, laying new plans for exertion and enjoyment, as long as he had power to make an effort. The famous motto of Dr. Doddridge, *Dum vivimus, vivamus*, has an

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CHAPTER VI.

The period of his exile from New York, during the Revolutionary War.

In the month of April, 1776, Dr. Rodgers was appointed chaplain to General Heath's brigade, consisting partly of militia, and partly of regular troops, enlisted for a short period. This brigade for several months, during the spring and summer of this year, was stationed near Greenwich, on New York island. The Doctor, therefore, after placing his family at Greenfield, as before stated, under the hospitable roof of his excellent son-in-law, the Rev. Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Tennent, returned to the neighbourhood of the city, and faithfully attended to the duties of his chaplaincy. Whatever he did, he *did with his might*. He engaged, with his wonted zeal in plans for benefiting the soldiery, and devoted himself to their best interests. He frequently, in subsequent years, pointed to a small grove near the spot on which the state prison now stands, and said, "That was my church in the summer and autumn of 1776."

In the month of November, of that year, having important private business to transact in the state of Georgia, he resigned his chaplaincy, and leaving his family still at Greenfield, he set out, by

admirable application here. There is no doubt, that the premature dotage of many distinguished men, has arisen from their ceasing, in advanced life, to exert their faculties, under the impression that they were too old to engage in any new enterprise. If the spirit of Dr. Rogers were more prevalent, old men would live with more comfort, and to more purpose.

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land, for Savannah. On this occasion, as well as every other of a similar kind, he made his journey a kind of evangelical mission; preaching, not only regularly on the Sabbath, but also on the evenings of week days, when he found the people in those towns in which he arrived desirous of hearing the word, and in circumstances which admitted of their being readily convened for the purpose. He had much reason to believe that his labours in the course of that journey were useful to many individuals.

Having spent some time in Charleston, and the intermediate country, he reached Savannah in the month of January. Here he remained a number of weeks, in the house of his friend, the Rev. Dr. Zubly,* who revered and loved him, and who had been his guest a short time before in New York.

* John Joachim Zubly, D. D., was a native of Switzerland. He came to America, and took charge of the Presbyterian Church in Savannah, in the year 1760. He not only preached in that church in the English language, but also in one neighbouring congregation in German, and in another in French. He was a member of the provincial congress of Georgia, in 1775; but as he took the side of opposition to American independence, he incurred the frowns of a majority of his fellow citizens, and became, for the remainder of his life, less happy and less useful. Dr. Zubly was a man of strong mind, of great learning, and of eminent piety. His evangelical labours were zealous, unwearied, and extensively useful. The few and small publications which he made, do honour to his memory. He died at Savannah, in 1781. Dr. Rodgers and he had a great respect for each other. The only subject on which they ever materially differed, was that of American independence. Dr. Zubly was much grieved in the course of the visit in question, at the decisive and ardent manner in which Dr. Rodgers prayed, in public and private, for the success of the arms, and the establishment of the independence of America.

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In Savannah he found himself on ground which had been often trod by his illustrious friend, and spiritual father, Mr. Whitefield; and had an opportunity of contemplating the monuments of his pious zeal. The friends of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ, received and treated him with the most pointed respect, and testified their readiness to embrace with affection one who appeared to have drunk so deep at the same fountain, and to be animated with the same spirit which distinguished their deceased friend and benefactor.

In the month of April, 1777, Dr. Rodgers returned from Georgia, and joined his family at Greenfield. On his way home, he was informed of his election to the office of chaplain to the Convention of the State of New York, then sitting in Esopus, and engaged, among other things, in forming a constitution for the State. On receiving this information, he immediately repaired to the Convention, and entered on the duties of his office. He continued to serve that body in the capacity of chaplain as long as it continued to sit. On the dissolution of the Convention, and on the power of the State being temporarily lodged in a council of safety, which, also, for some weeks, held its meetings at Esopus, the Doctor was chosen to the chaplaincy in that body. And shortly afterwards, when the first legislature of the State, under the new constitution, convened, he was a third time elected to serve the legislature in the same office. In fulfilling the duties of these successive appointments, he and his family, which he had now removed from Greenfield, were led to reside at Esopus the whole of the summer, and a part of the autumn of 1777.

Two or three days before the burning of Esopus

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by the British troops, which took place in October of this year, Dr. Rodgers, learning that the enemy's fleet was ascending the river, and fearing those acts of wanton and cruel devastation, which were afterwards so unhappily realized, thought proper to remove his family to the eastern side of the river, to a settlement smaller, and less likely to be the object of hostile operations than a town which was then the seat of government of the State. Here, in a house near the place of landing, he deposited the trunks containing his books, his plate, and all the most valuable articles of portable property, which the enemy and his frequent removals had left him. In this place he, as well as all whom he had consulted on the subject, considered them as perfectly safe, and supposed all further precaution to be unnecessary. In a few hours, however, after they were thus deposited, an aged and illiterate German, with whom he was but little acquainted, and whom he chiefly knew as a great friend to the clergy and to the American cause, came to him late at night, and with much apparent anxiety, asked him where he had left his baggage. The Doctor informed him. He replied with earnestness, "it must be removed this night." It was in vain that the distance of the place of deposit, which was several miles; the late hour of the night; the impossibility of obtaining the means of transportation until the next day, and the supposed safety of the baggage in its then situation, were urged. The honest German, to all these suggestions, had nothing else to reply than, "I tell you your things must be removed this night;" and when he found that no other plan would answer, actually took a wagon, and went himself and brought them to the place where the Doctor and

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his family lodged. It is remarkable, that before the light of the next morning dawned, the house in which this baggage had been deposited, was burnt to ashes by the British troops!

Esopus being burnt, the Doctor was compelled to seek some other place of residence. And considering the towns on the margin of the Hudson as too much exposed to the attacks of the enemy, he determined to select a more retired situation. With this view, he made choice of the town of Sharon, in the State of Connecticut, to which he removed his family towards the end of October, 1777, where he spent the following winter. During his residence here, he preached repeatedly for the Rev. Mr. Smith, the minister of the town, but more frequently to a congregation in the town of Amenia, in Dutchess county, New York, lying adjacent to Sharon, in which he shortly afterwards made a temporary settlement. The following extract of a letter from a gentleman residing in that neighbourhood, contains the best accounts that could be collected of his ministry, during the time that he spent in Sharon and Amenia:

"Dr. Rodgers came to Sharon, with his family, in the autumn of 1777, and for several successive Sabbaths preached in the Rev. Mr. Smith's pulpit, to the great acceptance of both pastor and people. Early in the following winter, in consequence of an urgent application, he consented to supply a congregation in the south-east part of Amenia, which had become vacant by the dismission of their minister, the Rev. Mr. Knibloe. The parish is composed in about equal numbers of inhabitants from the two adjoining States; the southern section of the town of Sharon, by an early regulation having been annexed, for parochial purposes, to

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that part of Amenia. The church is of the Congregational denomination, and stands connected with the Association of Litchfield county. At their place of worship, more than four miles distant from his abode, the Doctor attended regularly every Sunday, until the opening of the spring, when he removed his family into that neighbourhood. He has there left lasting memorials of his usefulness, and his name will be long held in grateful and affectionate remembrance. The society was agitated by the most unhappy divisions. A spirit of discord had prevailed for several years before the removal of their minister, and was far from being quieted by that event. Under these discouraging prospects, the Doctor commenced his labours; and by the blessing of God they were crowned with remarkable success. His mild and condescending, yet dignified deportment, more especially his fervent piety, the energy of his public addresses, and the sanctity of his life and conversation, effectually secured him the affection and reverence of all parties. Harmony was soon restored, and has continued without interruption until the present time. Shortly after his departure, the people united in building a new and more spacious church, and in making a permanent provision for the support of the gospel.

"But Dr. Rodgers did not confine his active and useful exertions to the place of his immediate residence. He preached lectures frequently in the neighbouring parishes. To a society of freemasons in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, by particular request, he delivered a sermon, which the society procured to be printed, and which was very favourably received by the public. He also made a tour into Vermont; dispensed the word in the several

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towns through which he passed; and every where attracted the deep regard of his hearers. He attended the various meetings of the clergy; and enjoyed, in an eminent degree, the confidence and esteem of his brethren in the ministry. They admired him, not only for those superior endowments which constituted 'his praise in all the churches,' but also for the gracefulness of his person and manners, the charms of his conversation, and the surprising patience and even cheerfulness with which he bore a painful exile, the duration of which was involved in the most gloomy uncertainty. In short, he was respected and beloved by all descriptions of men. And notwithstanding those in this part of the country, 'who knew him best and loved him most,' have preceded him to the grave, there are still many survivors to attest, not merely to his talents as a divine, but that no man ever exhibited a more happy union of all those qualities which go to form the gentleman and the Christian.

"Whilst the Doctor remained at Amenia, he received repeated and pressing solicitations to remove to Danbury, and preach to the first society in that town. Perceiving a prospect of more extensive usefulness in that quarter, and of better accommodations for his family, he at length yielded to these considerations, and, to the great regret of the people of Amenia, left them in the beginning of the year 1780."

It was in the month of April, in the year above mentioned, that the Doctor removed with his family to Danbury. He found the congregation in that town in a divided and broken state, and labouring under all those habits of coldness, negligence, and disorder, which the want of a pastor and of the regular administration of gospel ordinances,

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for several years preceding, might have been expected to produce. He proved to them, as he had proved to the congregation of Amenia, a messenger of peace. His prudence, wisdom, and zeal, were, as before, conspicuous. The divisions among the people were, in a great measure, healed; the ordinances of the gospel, some of which had been long neglected, were regularly administered; the church was greatly edified and comforted; and numbers were added to its communion, whose life and conversation have since manifested the sincerity of their profession.

While Dr. Rodgers was at Danbury, though he considered his settlement in that place as only temporary; and though he on this account declined being installed as the pastor of the church, expecting, on the restoration of peace, to return to his pastoral charge in New York; yet he judged it expedient to connect himself, in the mean while, with some regular ecclesiastical body. He, therefore, soon after his removal thither, joined the western Association of Fairfield county, of which he remained a member as long as he resided in the state. But he did not merely join the Association. Though a firm Presbyterian in principle, and a full believer in the apostolic origin of that form of church government; he thought himself justifiable, situated as he then was, in holding the most unreserved and affectionate communion with churches, which, though defective, approach so near to the primitive model as the Congregationalists of Connecticut. He therefore entered, with fraternal cordiality, into the whole ecclesiastical system, in the midst of which Providence had cast his lot. He assisted in ordaining, installing, and dismissing councils; he served, in his turn, as Moderator of

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Associations, and Consociations; and rendered himself highly acceptable to his neighbouring brethren in the ministry, and to the body of the people, by the promptness and zeal with which he co-operated with them in all plans for the general advancement of religion.

Although the labours of Dr. Rodgers in Danbury were not attended with any remarkable revival of religion, they were by no means without visible success. The congregation was gradually restored to union and order; the children were collected and instructed; the taste for sound and faithful preaching evidently increased; the attendance on public ordinances grew more and more general; and the whole aspect of the congregation, when he left it, was decidedly more favourable than when he commenced his labours as its pastor.

But the labours of this venerable servant of Christ, though generally and highly acceptable to the congregation, were not universally so. Some of the enemies of the truth, thought him, in many of his addresses from the pulpit, too plain and pointed to be borne. One person in particular, who held a sort of pre-eminence in this class, after hearing one of the Doctor's most solemn and pungent sermons, declared, that "if he ever went to hear him preach again, he hoped his arm might rot from his shoulder." In a few weeks afterwards, this person was seized with a swelling in his right hand, which gradually extending up his arm, a mortification ensued, and he died miserably; his arm, before his death, literally rotting from his body. This event made a deep impression on multitudes; though the unhappy victim

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himself, to the last hour of his life, discovered no symptoms of relenting or penitence.*

Dr. Rodgers, while in Danbury, as had been the case in the former places of his residence, by no means confined his labours to his own congregation. He was an unwearied labourer in the word and doctrine, and an assiduous peace-maker, wherever he went. He preached in vacant parishes; assisted his neighbouring brethren in their public labours; interposed with his best advice, and conciliatory persuasion, in cases of ecclesiastical division and difficulty; and, in one instance particularly, was the means of bringing about a reconciliation between a neighbouring church, and a refractory member, to effect which, the benevolent exertions of others had long been employed in vain.

In the spring of the year 1782, when the Doctor had resided a little more than two years in Danbury, some circumstances occurring which rendered his situation less pleasant than before, he determined to leave it; and being invited about the same time by the church of Lamington, in Hunterdon county, New Jersey, to come and minister to them, as long as he should remain an exile from his own people, he accepted their invitation. And, accordingly, in the month of May, of that year, he and his family were removed from Danbury, at the expense of the congregation of Lamington, and put in possession of their parsonage house, which he continued to occupy until the autumn of 1783.

The following extract of a letter from the Rev.

* The author never heard Dr. Rodgers state this fact, or allude to it. He received it from an aged and venerable deacon of that church, a short time after the death of the subject of this memoir.

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Enoch Burt, then the pastor of the church of Lamington, presents a view of the Doctor's ministry there, which, though brief, will be found comprehensive and satisfactory.

"The regular pastor of this church, the Rev Jeremiah Halsey, died in October, 1780, after a ministry in this place of about ten years. In March, 1781, the Rev. Dr. Mason, who had probably left the city of New York about the time that Dr. Rodgers did, came to Lamington, occupied the parsonage house, and preached occasionally as a supply. Some months afterwards, the congregation, hearing that Dr. Rodgers was at Danbury, in Connecticut, had a meeting for the purpose of giving him an invitation to take the pastoral charge of them during his absence from the city. The result of this meeting was a unanimous request for that purpose. This request the Doctor complied with; and in the month of May, 1782, his family was removed by the congregation to Lamington, and put in possession of the parsonage, which he occupied during his stay among them. He continued from that time until his return to New York, to discharge regularly all the duties of a pastor to this church, though without the forms of what we denominate a regular call, or installation.

"The Doctor's ministry here, although attended with no more than ordinary success, was yet performed faithfully, zealously, and with a great degree of plainness of speech. On this subject he often remarked, that he felt himself bound to adapt his instructions to the very meanest capacity of his hearers; so that none might remain unbenefited by his labours. His zeal for the visible honour and word of his Divine Master, made him jealous of

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whatever appeared like disrespect toward the ordinances of the gospel. Something of this will appear from the following circumstance. It was, at that day, very common here, to see individuals rise from their seats during the course of the sermon, and almost as soon as risen, turning their backs toward the speaker. This practice appeared to him so much like visible disrespect to the word of God, that he viewed it with indignation, and ceased not to reprobate it publicly in the strongest terms, until he had entirely abolished the practice.

"He manifested continually, that it was the desire and joy of his heart to see Zion prosper. Of this there were many proofs during his residence in Lamington. One example shall suffice. Hearing, while here, of a revival of religion at Redstone, in Pennsylvania, and that the inhabitants of that district of country were but partially supplied with copies of the Scriptures, he opened a subscription in the congregation, and obtained a considerable sum, with which he purchased Bibles, and sent them thither.

"He made it his business, while here, to visit the schools in the congregation, to examine and catechize the children, and to do every thing in his power for their encouragement and religious instruction.

"On the whole, although Dr. Rodgers's ministry at Lamington, was not attended with any remarkable power, or signal success, at the time, yet there is an abundant reason to believe that it was far from being in vain; that he obtained here some seals of his ministry, which will be crowns of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord; and that the precious seed of the word which he here scat-

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tered, with a diligent and skilful hand, has since sprung up, and borne fruit to everlasting life."

In a short time after the definitive treaty of peace was signed, the disbanding of the American armies commenced. About this time Dr. Rodgers, whose mind was ever busily employed in forming plans of piety and benevolence, suggested to some leading persons the propriety of presenting to each soldier, on retiring from service, a Bible. The war had, of course, entirely suspended the importation of Bibles from Great Britain; and they had become, prior to the year 1781, extremely scarce in this country. Under these circumstances, it was found, as might naturally have been expected, that the needy soldiery were almost wholly destitute of copies of the Scriptures. In the year last mentioned, an enterprising printer and bookseller of Philadelphia,* printed a large edition of the Bible. This event, however, though it removed the difficulty arising from the scarcity of copies of the sacred volume, by no means supplied the army. Dr. Rodgers determined to interest himself, and to take measures for prevailing with others to interest themselves, in furnishing the defenders of their country with so valuable a present. Among those whom he endeavoured to engage in this pious design, was the commander in chief, to whom he addressed a letter, congratulating him on the resto-

* Mr. Robert Aitkin. His duodecimo Bible, printed in 1781, was the first Bible, in the English language, ever printed in North America. Five years before, (1776,) Mr. Christopher Sower had printed, at Germantown, near Philadelphia, a quarto edition of the Bible, in German; and more than a hundred years before, (1664,) the Rev. John Eliot had printed, at Cambridge, in Massachusetts, an edition of the Bible, in the language of the Natick Indians.

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ration of peace, and proposing the exertion of his influence for the attainment of this desirable end. The following answer to the Doctor's letter, while it serves to assign one of the reasons why his pious plan did not succeed, will also furnish another testimony of the uniform dignity and greatness of the wonderful man by whom it was written.

Head-Quarters, 11th June, 1783.

"DEAR SIR,

"I accept, with much pleasure, your kind congratulations on the happy event of Peace, with the establishment of our Liberties and Independence.

"Glorious indeed has been our contest: glorious, if we consider the prize for which we have contended, and glorious in its issue. But in the midst of our joys, I hope we shall not forget, that to Divine Providence is to be ascribed the glory and the praise.

"Your proposition respecting Mr. Aitkin's Bible would have been particularly noticed by me, had it been suggested in season. But the late resolution of Congress for discharging part of the army taking off near two thirds of our numbers, it is now too late to make the attempt. It would have pleased me well, if Congress had been pleased to make such an important present to the brave fellows who have done so much for the security of their country's rights and establishment.

"I hope it will not be long before you will be able to go quietly to New York. Some patience, however, will yet be necessary. But patience is a noble virtue, and, when rightly exercised, does not fail of its reward.

"With much regard and esteem, I am dear
Doctor, Your most obedient servant,
"GEO. WASHINGTON."

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"P. S. Be so good as to inform me whether Mrs. Thompson is living with you, or gone into New York? Before I retire from service, it is my wish to render her what is owing her.*

"Rev. Dr. Rodgers, G. W."

While Dr. Rodgers was thus a sojourner, and variously, but always usefully, employed, during his exile from New York, it may be proper to inquire, what was going on, in the mean time, in that city, in relation to his affairs, and the interests of the church with which he was connected.

The British armies in the course of the revolutionary contest, whenever they had an opportunity, manifested a peculiar hostility to the Presbyterian Church. This hostility, prompted partly by sectarian rancour, and partly by the consideration that the Presbyterians were generally favourable to the American cause, was displayed by many acts of violence and indignity of the most wanton kind.† The Presbyterian churches in New York,

* This postscript, though irrelevant to the main subjects of the letter, is retained, not only as another example of the scrupulous justice of the illustrious writer; but also to show that he had a mind which, while it grasped great objects, was capable of attending to minute details.

† The following is extracted from a note in a sermon, delivered and published by Dr. Rodgers, entitled, A Sermon preached in New York, Dec. 11, 1783, appointed by Congress, as a day of public thanksgiving throughout the United States, p. 26. "It is much to be lamented, that the troops of a nation that has been considered as one of the bulwarks of the Reformation, should act as if they had waged war with the God whom Christians adore. They have, in the course of this war, utterly destroyed more than fifty places of public worship, in these states. Most of these they burnt, others they levelled with the ground, and in some places left not a vestige of their former situation; while they have wantonly defaced, or, rather

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were the objects of special vengeance. The church in Wall street was immediately seized, and converted into barracks; and that in Beekman street into an hospital. It is hardly necessary to add, that in preparing them for these purposes re-

destroyed others, by converting them into barracks, jails, hospitals, riding schools, &c. Boston, Newport, Philadelphia, and Charleston, all furnished melancholy instances of this prostitution, and abuse of the houses of God: and of the nineteen places of public worship in this city, when the war began, there were but nine fit for use, when the British troops left it. It is true, Trinity church, and the old Lutheran, were destroyed by the fire, that laid waste so great a part of the city, a few nights after the enemy took possession of it; and therefore they are not charged with designedly burning them, though they were the occasion of it; for there can be no doubt, after all that malice has said to the contrary, but the fire was occasioned by the carelessness of their people, and they prevented its more speedy extinguishment. But the ruinous situation in which they left two of the Low Dutch Reformed churches, the three Presbyterian churches, the French Protestant church, the Anabaptist church, and the Friends' new meeting-house, was the effect of design, and strongly marks their enmity to those societies."

Concerning the Middle Dutch church, in Nassau street, which in the beginning of the war, was used by the British garrison as a prison, and afterwards turned into a riding school, the venerable Dr. Livingston thus expresses himself in a sermon, delivered July 4th, 1790, when it was for the first time opened for public worship, after being repaired: "I dare not speak of the wanton cruelty of those who destroyed this temple, nor repeat the various indignities which have been perpetrated. It would be easy to mention facts which would chill your blood! A recollection of the groans of dying prisoners, which pierced this ceiling; or the sacrilegious sports and rough feats of horsemanship exhibited within these walls, might raise sentiments in your minds, that would, perhaps not harmonize with those religious affections, which I wish, at present, to promote, and always to cherish."

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spectively, they were not only defaced, but almost entirely stripped of their appropriate interior; and that they were left in a most ruinous condition. Nor was this all. The parsonage house, belonging to the congregation, was, during the same period, destroyed. It fell a prey to the dreadful fire, which consumed so large a portion of the city, in a few weeks after the British troops took possession of it, in the autumn of 1776.

In the spring of the year 1783, when it became known that the preliminary articles of peace with Great Britain had been signed, an intercourse began to take place between the city of New York, and the adjacent country. On the commencement of this intercourse, many of the old inhabitants of the city returned from their exile; and among these were some of the members of the Presbyterian churches. In the course of the ensuing summer a few more returned. But the larger portion remained in their various places of retirement until the evacuation of the city by the British troops, which took place on the 25th of November, 1783. On the 26th, the day after the evacuation, Dr. Rodgers returned with his family to the city; and in a short time afterwards, the great body of the exiles were restored to their former habitations.

In taking a retrospect of the conduct and character of Dr. Rodgers, with reference to the revolutionary war, it will be nothing more than justice to his memory, and may not be unprofitable to others, to make two or three general remarks.

The first is, that although constitutionally, as well as by habit, a prudent and cautious man, and perhaps sometimes so to an extreme; yet when the path of duty became perfectly plain, he pursued it with fearless intrepidity. This was the case

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with respect to the American contest. The decision with which he acted in that contest, was beyond what was usual with him. A gentleman of great political eminence in the United States,* who was much with him, and had the best opportunity of observing his conduct, during that interesting period; and who is also of a different religious denomination, expresses himself, in a communication on the subject, in the following respectful terms. "The late Dr. Rodgers appeared to me a Christian and a gentleman. Believing the opposition of America to be right, he adhered to her cause; and was a good whig, because he was a good Christian. Being chaplain to the Convention, he followed that body from place to place, with much personal inconvenience, and I believe too, at a considerable pecuniary sacrifice."

A second remark is, that, while he was a firm, and even an ardent whig, yet he did not forget that he was a minister of Jesus Christ; and never failed to make the latter his prominent character. When a Christian minister ventures much into the society of political men, and suffers his attention to be habitually occupied with their schemes and measures; and especially when he undertakes, in his public prayers and sermons, to expatiate freely on the political events of the day, he attempts a task as difficult as it is delicate. Nay, it may not be going too far to say, that he undertakes a task in which his ministerial feelings and character will seldom wholly escape injury. The truth of this remark, if the writer is not greatly deceived, was often exemplified during the revolutionary war. The conduct of many of the clergy, and especially

* The Hon. Gouverneur Morris, Esq.

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of those of the Presbyterian Church, in the course of that struggle, was indeed nobly patriotic, and eminently useful. Yet it may be seriously doubted, whether some of them, in their zeal, did not, now and then, in their public ministrations, as well as in their private intercourse, overstep the bounds of propriety; and appear more like politicians, pleading an earthly cause, than servants of the meek and benevolent Jesus, referring every thing to his wise and holy government, and breathing peace on earth and good will toward men.* It would, perhaps,

* It has been said, and doubtless with truth, that while many pious ministers, and other Christians in America, during the revolutionary war, were praying, in public and in private, that the counsels of Great Britain might be overthrown; that defeat and destruction might attend their military and naval armaments; and that victory, in every quarter, might crown our arms; thousands of pious persons, on the other side of the Atlantic, were praying, in the same language, against America, and in favour of British oppressions. Is it possible to suppose that such opposite petitions, on the same subject, were equally acceptable to Him who hears prayers? It is not possible. But it may be asked, where is the remedy for such occurrences? The remedy lies in ministers and others, when they address the throne of grace, being less of politicians, and more of Christians. It is plain that, if men were less prone to prescribe to the Most High in prayer, and more ready to adopt those humble, submissive, and filial forms of petition, of which the Sacred Volume gives so many noble examples, real Christians, in different countries, even in the midst of war, might meet at the throne of grace, as on common territory, and unite in precisely the same requests. Some have been inconsiderate enough to allege, that a remedy for all this difficulty may be found, as far as prayers are concerned, in the adoption of stated forms of prayer. But if such persons had an opportunity of perusing a few of the "forms" and "offices," prepared "by authority," to be used on fast and thanksgiving days, and in "times of war," in countries where liturgies are esta-

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be extravagant praise to say, that Dr. Rodgers, amidst the contagion of the times, was, in this respect, wholly free from fault. But he was certainly much more free from the fault in question, than most of those active clergymen of the day, who took the same side, and possessed as much ardour of mind, as himself. Wherever he went, he set a noble example of devotedness to the ministry of reconciliation. Whether he addressed conventions, or legislatures, brigades of soldiers, or Christian churches, the peculiar and precious doctrines of the gospel were not only the constant, but the leading subjects of discourse. And the tendency of all his preaching, was to lead the minds of his hearers from this scene of conflict and change, of sin and sorrow, to a more holy and happy world.

Finally; Dr. Rodgers, amidst all the decision with which he thought, and the firmness with which he acted, during the struggle for American Independence, was distinguished for his liberality toward those, who adopted different opinions, and took a different course. He was remarkably free from the bitterness of party animosity, and ever ready to make allowance for the diversity of views

blished, they would frequently find much of their contents quite as exceptionable, both in spirit and expression, as what sometimes falls from the lips in extemporaneous fervour; with this difference, that in the one case, the evil is confined to its immediate authors; while in the other, it is imposed on thousands, and forced into every reading-desk into which the form is introduced. There is no remedy to be hoped for from this quarter. It is to be found in the prevalence among ministers of the gospel, of piety, good sense, sound judgment, and minds deeply imbued with the language and the spirit of the Holy Scriptures.

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and of conduct, which he had occasion to observe in others. Those who are acquainted with the history of his private friendships, and of his affectionate correspondence, after the melancholy disruption of social bonds, which the Revolution, in so many cases, produced, cannot doubt that "the law of kindness" was in his heart, as well as upon his lips. The same gentleman who was last adduced as a witness of the Doctor's patriotism,* thus speaks, in the same communication, on this part of his character. "In his opinion of others, he showed the liberality of a gentleman. Not soured by that intolerant spirit which assails, and sometimes subdues clerical men of great talents and worth, he had not only the faith, and the hope, but also the charity of a Christian."

CHAPTER VII.

From the Revolutionary War till his last illness.

THE situation in which the subject of this memoir, and the remains of his flock, found themselves on returning from their exile, may be more easily imagined than described. Their numbers greatly reduced by death, and by permanent removals to the country; the pecuniary resources of all of them impaired, and many of them exhausted; both their houses of worship in a state little short of complete ruin; their parsonage burnt; and a considerable debt accumulated in consequence of

* Mr. Morris.

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their long exclusion from the city—it may be supposed that nothing but Christian faith could have preserved them from total discouragement. This faith they were enabled, in some degree, to exercise. They trusted in the faithfulness of the great Head of the Church; in His name they lifted up their banner; and He did not either forsake them or disappoint their hopes.

The first and most serious difficulty which presented itself, was the want of a place of worship. A number of months, it was perceived, must necessarily intervene before either of their churches could be prepared for the reception of a worshiping assembly. In this extremity, the vestry of Trinity church, unsolicited, and with a politeness which did them honour, made an offer of St. George's and St. Paul's churches, to be used by the congregation alternately, until one of their own churches could be repaired. This offer was gratefully accepted; and from November, 1783, until the following June, the remains of the congregation alternately worshipped, in conformity with a settled arrangement, in the spacious edifices just mentioned.

In a few days after Dr. Rodgers recommenced his ministration in New York, the day which had been recommended by Congress to be observed throughout the United States as a day of thanksgiving and prayer, arrived. On this occasion he delivered a sermon on Psal. cxxvi. 3, which was afterwards published under the following title: "The Divine Goodness displayed in the American Revolution."* This was the second publication

* This sermon was delivered December 11th, 1783, in St. George's chapel.

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he ever made;* and it is valuable, not only on the account of the pious and judicious discussion of its subject, in a religious view, but also on account of the historical matter with which the body of the discourse and the notes are enriched.

It being found that the Brick church, in Beekman street, had suffered less from the ravages of the enemy, and could be repaired more speedily, and at much less expense than the church in Wall street, it was determined to attempt the restoration of the former without delay. The work was immediately commenced, and completed in about six months, at an expense of between three and four thousand dollars. It was first opened for public worship, after being repaired, on the 27th of June, 1784, when the Doctor delivered a sermon on Psalm cxxii. 1: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

As long as the congregation continued to meet in churches belonging to another denomination, it was not easy to draw the line between stated and occasional worshippers. The opening of the Brick church furnished the first opportunity of drawing this line, and of determining the real strength of the congregation. The result was more favourable than could have been expected. It soon became apparent that the demand for pews could not be supplied, and that another church was indispensable for the accommodation of the people. It was

* The first was a sermon under the following title: "Holiness the Nature and design of the Gospel of Christ: A Sermon preached at Stockbridge, June 24th, 1779, before the Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Berkshire county, State of Massachusetts; and published by their request." This sermon was preached and published during the Doctor's residence at Amenia.

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resolved, therefore, as soon as the necessary funds could be procured, to undertake the repairing of the church in Wall street.

The Rev. Mr. Treat did not return to the city after the close of the war. Some considerations of a personal nature induced him to remain in the country until the summer of the year 1784, when, on the 1st day of July, the congregation assembled, and, among other resolutions, unanimously adopted the following: "*Resolved*, That this congregation can support but one minister. *Resolved*, That the Rev. Dr. Rodgers be that minister. *Resolved*, That a committee be appointed to apply to the moderator of the Presbytery, and request him to call a meeting of that body as soon as convenient, that we may apply, in a regular manner, for a liberation of this congregation from the Rev. Mr. Treat, as one of our ministers." This application to the Presbytery was regularly prosecuted; and on the 20th day of October following, at Elizabethtown, the pastoral relation between Mr. Treat and the congregatien of New York was dissolved.

In the month of March, 1784, Dr. Rodgers, and such of the elders and deacons as had returned from exile, presented a petition to the corporation of the city praying a remission of the arrears of rent, which had accumulated during the war, on the lot upon which the Brick church was erected, and also requesting a reduction of the annual rent of the said lot. The prayer of the petition, with respect to both these points, was granted. The back rents, amounting to between seven and eight hundred dollars, were all remitted; and the annual rent was reduced from one hundred dollars to nearly half that sum.

The Legislature of the State, in their first ses-

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sion after the conclusion of peace, passed an act entitled "An act to enable all the religious denominations in this State to appoint Trustees, who shall be a body corporate, for the purpose of taking care of the temporalities of their respective congregations, and for other purposes therein mentioned." This act, which is dated April 6th, 1784, at once afforded relief from all the vexations and injuries which had been so long sustained, for want of a charter, under the oppressions of the provincial government. In the course of the following month, the Presbyterian congregation met, and became a body corporate, agreeably to the provisions of the act, under the style of "The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York." The first trustees were Peter Van Brugh Livingston, Joseph Hallet, William Neilson, Daniel McCormick, Daniel Phœnix, Eleazer Miller, Samuel Broom, Archibald Currie, and John McKesson. Dr. Rodgers, and the other surviving gentlemen, to whom the Brick church, and the lot on which it stands, had been conveyed in trust, re-conveyed them to this corporation soon after it was constituted.

The numerous applications for pews, mentioned in a former page, induced the newly elected trustees, with the advice of the other officers and members of the congregation, to hasten the repairing of the Wall street church. The work was accordingly commenced in the autumn of 1784, and completed, at an expense of between six and seven thousand dollars, in the month of June following.* On the 19th day of that month it was opened for

* The whole of the interior of the Wall street church had been destroyed during the war. Nothing but the walls and the roof, or rather the principal timbers of the roof, were left.

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public worship, and a sermon preached by Dr. Rodgers, from Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2. The pews on the ground floor were all immediately taken, and a number of those in the gallery.

The expense of repairing these churches was defrayed by subscription. And as this subscription was taken up at a period peculiarly inauspicious for raising money, a more than common share of address, patience, and perseverance, was necessary for prosecuting it with success. Dr. Rodgers, as usual, shrunk from no task that was assigned him. He went from door to door, for a number of weeks, begging for the church; and chiefly to his exertions, under God, may the speedy and happy accomplishment of the undertaking be ascribed.

Toward the close of the year 1784, Mr. James Wilson, a licensed candidate for the gospel ministry, arrived in New York from Scotland. It was perceived that when the Wall street church, which was then repairing, should be completed, a second minister would be absolutely necessary for the maintenance of regular service in both churches. Mr. Wilson having preached for several months, on probation, to the acceptance of the people, it was determined to call him to be one of their pastors. This was done, unanimously, on the 29th day of April, 1785. Mr. Wilson accepted the call, and was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry; and installed collegiate pastor, with Dr. Rodgers, of the united churches of New York, on the 10th day of August following.

Soon after the close of the revolutionary war, the legislature of New York passed an act, establishing a board, styled, "The Regents of the University of New York." The powers and du-

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ties of this board are highly important. To them it belongs to grant charters of incorporation to all seminaries of learning; to visit and inspect colleges and other seminaries; and in general, to watch over the interests of literature throughout the state. Of this university Dr. Rodgers was chosen Vice-Chancellor, which place he continued to occupy until his death.

In the month of May, in the year 1785, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, then the supreme judicatory of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, began to take those steps for revising the public standards of the church, which issued in their adoption and establishment on the present plan. Every step in this system of measures, affords evidence of the respect in which the subject of this memoir was held, and the confidence reposed in his wisdom and fidelity. He was a member of almost every committee appointed to conduct the business. On the 23d day of May, in the year just mentioned, the Synod being convened in Philadelphia, it was on motion resolved, "That Dr. Witherspoon, Dr. Rodgers, Dr. Robert Smith,* Dr. Patrick Allison, Dr. Samuel S. Smith, Mr. John Woodhull, Mr. Cooper,† Mr. Latta,‡ Dr.

* The Rev. Dr. Robert Smith, of Pequea, Pennsylvania, a gentleman of respectable talents and learning, and of eminent piety. His most important publication consists of three sermons on Faith, in the fourth volume of the American Preacher. He died about twelve years before Dr. Rodgers.

† The Rev. Robert Cooper, of Shippensburgh, Pennsylvania, afterwards Doctor of Divinity. Dr. Cooper had a remarkably strong, sound mind; and though late in acquiring an education, and entering the ministry, he was a divine of great judiciousness, piety, and worth.

‡ The Rev. James Latta, of Chestnut Level, Pennsylvania, afterwards Doctor of Divinity. Dr. Latta, for talents

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Duffield, and Mr. Matthew Wilson, be a committee to take into consideration the constitution of the Church of Scotland, and other protestant churches; and agreeably to the general principles of Presbyterian government, complete a system of general rules for the government of the Synod, and the several Presbyteries under their inspection, and the people in their communion; and to make report of their proceedings herein at the next meeting of Synod."

The same afternoon, an overture was brought into Synod, "That, for the better management of the churches under our care, this Synod be divided into three Synods; and that a general Synod, or Assembly, be constituted out of the whole." The consideration of this overture was postponed till the next year.

On the 17th of May, 1786, on resuming the consideration of this overture, the following motion was introduced into the Synod, and carried in the affirmative, viz: "*Resolved*, That this Synod will establish, out of its own body, three or more subordinate Synods, out of which shall be composed a General Assembly, Synod, or Council, agreeably to a system hereafter to be adopted." In pursuance of this resolution, the Rev. Doctors Rodgers, Smith, Duffield* and Allison;† and the Rev.

and learning, as well as piety, held a high place among the clergy of his day. He died at an advanced age, a few years before Dr. Rodgers. He published a Discourse on Psalmody, which does honour to his memory.

* The Rev. George Duffield, D. D., Pastor of the church in Pine street, Philadelphia. This gentleman was distinguished for the fervour of his piety, his intimate acquaintance with the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, and his excellent powers as an extemporary preacher.

† The Rev. Patrick Allison, D. D., was born in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, in the year 1740. He received

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Messrs. Latta, Martin, Matthew Wilson, Graham, Houston, James Finley, and Hall, were appointed "a committee to prepare and report a plan for the division of the Synod into three or more Synods."

On the 22d day of May, in this year, the committee appointed in 1785, to mature a system of discipline and government for the church, made their report, which was referred to another committee, consisting of the following gentlemen, viz: the Rev. Doctors Witherspoon, Rodgers, McWhorter, Sproat,* Duffield, Allison, Ewing,† Smith, and

his education in the College of Philadelphia; was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed pastor of the Presbyterian church in Baltimore, in the year 1762; where he remained honoured and useful until his death, which took place in 1802, in the sixty-second year of his age. Dr. Allison undoubtedly held a place in the very first rank of American clergy. He shone with distinguished lustre in the judicatories of the church. For the perspicuity, the correctness, the sound reasoning, and the masculine eloquence of his speeches, in ecclesiastical assemblies, he was long admired, and had scarcely an equal.

* The Rev. James Sproat, D. D., was a native of Scituate, in Massachusetts, where he was born April 11th, 1721. He received his education in Yale College; was ordained to the work of the ministry at Guilford, Connecticut, August 23d, 1743; was removed to the pastoral charge of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, in March, 1769; and died October 18th, 1793, in the seventy-third year of his age. Dr. Sproat was one of the most venerable and excellent ministers of his day.

† The Rev. John Ewing, D. D., pastor of the First Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, and Provost of the University of Pennsylvania. He was born at Nottingham, in Maryland, June 21st, 1732; was graduated in the college of New Jersey, then at Newark, in 1754; was settled as pastor of the First Presbyterian church in 1759; was elected Provost of the University of Pennsylvania in 1779, and died September 8th, 1802, in the seventy-first year of his age. The eminent character of this gentleman; the

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Wilson; together with Isaac Snowden, Esq., and Mr. Robert Taggart, and Mr. John Pinkerton, elders. This committee was directed to meet in Philadelphia, in the month of September following; and was empowered to "digest such a system as they shall think to be accommodated to the Presbyterian Church in America, and procure three hundred copies to be printed and distributed among the Presbyteries."

After several meetings, and reports, in part, by these committees, the Synod, on the 28th day of May, 1788, completed the revision and arrangement of our public standards, and finally adopted them, and ordered them to be printed and distributed for the government of all the judicatories of the Church. This new arrangement consisted, in dividing the body as it formerly stood into four Synods, viz. the Synod of New York and New Jersey, the Synod of Philadelphia, the Synod of Virginia, and the Synod of the Carolinas; and constituting over these, as a bond of union, a General Assembly, in all essential particulars after the model of the General Assembly of the established Church of Scotland. The Westminster Confession of Faith, with three inconsiderable alterations;* and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms,

vigour of his talents; the extent of his learning; his extraordinary accomplishments as the head of a literary institution; and his excellence as a preacher, are well known. His lectures on natural philosophy, and a volume of sermons, will long attest them.

* These alterations in the Westminster Confession of Faith, consisted in modifying the last section of the twentieth chapter, entitled, "Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience;" the third section of the twenty-third chapter, entitled, "Of the Civil Magistrates;" and the first section of the thirty-first chapter, entitled, "Of Synods and Councils."

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with one small amendment in the former,* were solemnly adopted as a summary exhibition of the faith of the church. And a Form of Government and Discipline, and Directory for public worship, &c., drawn chiefly from the standards of the Church of Scotland, with such alterations as the form of the civil government, and the state of the church, in this country, required, completed the system.

The adopting acts above stated, were immediately followed by a resolution, declaring, that "the true intent and meaning of the above ratification by the Synod is, that the Form of Government and Discipline, and the Confession of Faith, as now ratified, is to continue to be our Constitution, and the Confession of our Faith and practice, unalterably, unless two-thirds of the Presbyteries, under the care of the General Assembly, shall propose alterations or amendments, and such alterations or amendments shall be agreed to and enacted by the General Assembly."

The Synod, in adopting this system, though nearly unanimous, was not entirely so. In the course of the ample discussion which took place on the subject, a plan of church government was proposed more nearly approaching to the congregational form, than that which was finally preferred. The principal advocate of this plan, was the Rev. Dr. Matthew Wilson, of Lewes, in the state of Delaware, a gentleman of great piety, learning, and benevolence,† who had objections almost in-

* This single amendment in the Larger Catechism, consisted in expunging the words "the tolerating of a false religion," from the answer to the 109th question, "What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?"

† The writer of these pages embraces, with particular

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vincible, against the rigid Presbyterianism of Scotland, and who was not without difficulty reconciled to the mitigated form of it, which was finally chosen for the Church in America. He drew up and offered a plan of government, in detail, more conformable to his own views, which was so respectfully considered by the Synod, that it was publicly read in their hearing. He was seconded in his efforts to recommend this plan, among others, by his friend and neighbour, the Rev. John Miller, pastor of the church in Dover, Delaware, and the

pleasure, this opportunity of paying a small tribute of respect to the memory of the Rev. Dr. Wilson, his own friend, and his father's friend; and whom he can never recollect, without mingled emotions of the tenderest affection, and the most profound veneration. Ingenious, learned, pious, patriotic, and benevolent, in an eminent degree, all that knew him, respected him; and he had no enemies but the enemies of truth and righteousness. Though every circumstance, in his early life, conspired to place him among those who were called Old-side men, in the great controversy which divided the church in his day; yet such was the fervour of his piety, and the amiableness of his temper, that both parties loved him; and he was taken by the hand, by his New-side brethren, and heard by their congregations, with as much pleasure as if he had been nominally with them. An ardent lover of peace, he lamented the divisions which agitated the church when he came into the ministry; and was one of the principal instruments of bringing about the Union of 1758, an account of which was given in a former chapter. Dr. Wilson was an eminent physician as well as divine. He was born in Chester county, Pennsylvania, January 15, 1731; received his academical education under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Francis Allison, and the Rev. Dr. Alexander McDowell; settled as the pastor of Lewes and Cool Spring congregation, in Delaware, in 1755: received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Pennsylvania, in 1786: and died March 30, 1790, universally lamented.

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father of the writer of this memoir,* They failed, however, of procuring the adoption of their system. The model of the Church of Scotland, though not servilely copied, was with great justice, in general, preferred; and a form of government and discipline, as nearly corresponding with that model, as the different circumstances of the two countries rendered expedient, was finally established.

On the 21st of May, 1789, the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, under the new arrangement, met in Philadelphia. Dr. Rodgers had the honour of being the first moderator of that body; and seldom failed of being sent as one of the delegates to represent his Presbytery in the General Assembly, as long as he had sufficient health and strength to encounter a journey to the usual place of its meetings.

While these events, so important, and so favourable to the general interests of the church, were taking place, the congregations in New York were destined to experience new agitations and difficulties. The Rev. Mr. Wilson, after labouring in a collegiate connexion with Dr. Rodgers, for nearly three years, with great diligence and faithfulness, found himself affected with a pulmonary complaint, which threatened serious conse-

* The Rev. John Miller, A. M., was a native of Boston in Massachusetts, where he was born in the year 1721. After receiving a regular academical and theological education, he was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, in his native town, in 1748; and took the pastoral charge of the united congregations of Dover and Duck Creek, in Delaware, toward the close of the same year. He continued in that pastoral charge, diligent, faithful, and beloved, until July, 1791, when he died, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, and the forty-fourth of his ministry.

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quences. Receiving, about this time, a call from the Presbyterian church of Charleston, in South Carolina, where there was reason to believe that both the climate and the service required of him, would be more favourable to his health, than those of New York, he judged it to be his duty to accept of the call; of which, accordingly, he declared his acceptance on the 22d day of January, 1788. He was immediately dismissed, by the Presbytery, from his pastoral charge in New York; and in a few days afterwards left the city, with a view to proceed to Charleston, sincerely and deservedly esteemed.*

The measures taken for supplying the vacancy occasioned by the removal of Mr. Wilson, gave rise to no small uneasiness and difficulty. The congregations soon became divided into two parties. The one was warmly in favour of giving a call to the Rev. Mr. James Muir, who had been for several years invested with a pastoral charge in the island of Bermuda, and had, a short time before, paid a visit to New York. The other was quite as warmly in favour of calling Mr. Jedidiah Morse, then a candidate for the gospel ministry.† Both of these gentlemen preached several months on probation; and each of them had numerous and zealous friends. The contention concerning them

* Mr. Wilson, after spending several years usefully and comfortably in Charleston, returned to Scotland, his native country, where he remained a year or two, and then again came to America. He never took a pastoral charge, however, after his second visit to this country, but, after struggling with ill health, for a long time, died in Virginia, in the year 1799, in the forty-eighth year of his age.

† Now the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, D. D., pastor of the church in Charlestown, Massachusetts, whose high character and useful writings are well known.

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ran high during the greater part of a year, and threatened very serious consequences. But Mr Morse, after a time, declining to be considered as a candidate for the place, and retiring from the city; and Mr. Muir, soon afterwards, receiving and accepting a call from the city of Alexandria, in Virginia,* the congregations were restored to tolerable quietness and harmony, in the spring of the year 1789, by each party giving up its favourite.

After spending a number of months in the most uncomfortable strife, the congregations, in the summer of the year 1789, gave a call to the Rev. Mr. John McKnight,† pastor of the church in Marsh Creek, Pennsylvania, and a member of the Presbytery of Carlisle. It being deemed of great importance that this call, in the then peculiar state of the congregations, should be successful, Dr. Rodgers was prevailed upon to be its bearer, and to prosecute it before the Presbytery of Carlisle. His mission was attended with success. Mr. McKnight accepted the call, on the 8th day of September, 1789, and was installed as a collegiate pastor of the united churches, with Dr. Rodgers, on the 2d day of December following. Under his ministrations the churches soon became united and harmonious; and their prospects of spiritual comfort and increase again brightened.

As soon as the difficulties occasioned by the

* The Rev. Mr. Muir, afterwards Doctor of Divinity, for many years resided at Alexandria, with honour and usefulness. His various publications have been well received.

† Mr. McKnight, soon after his removal to New York received the degree of Doctor of Divinity, from Ye College.

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revolutionary war were, in some degree, surmounted, it became a favourite object with the pastors and other officers of the Presbyterian churches in New York, to establish a regular charity school for the education of their poor children. The legacy of Captain Owen, before mentioned, laid the foundation of such an establishment.* In 1787, a subscription was opened for carrying into effect the same benevolent design, when about one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars were obtained. In 1788, Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson, a pious and exemplary member of the church, bequeathed to the corporation, near nine hundred dollars, for the same purpose. These fruits of Christian liberality enabled the trustees to begin their school. This was accordingly done on the first day of May, 1789, by employing a master to teach their poor children, and hiring a suitable apartment for their accommodation, until a school-house could be erected. The last mentioned object was accomplished in 1790. In that year the trustees purchased a lot in Nassau street, between Liberty and Cedar streets, on which they erected a brick building, of sufficient extent to furnish an ample school-room, and accommodations for the family of the instructer. In April, 1792, Mr. James Leslie, a school-master, and long an exemplary member of the church, bequeathed to the trustees the sum of five hundred dollars, to be added to the school fund. These legacies, together with annual public collections, enabled them constantly to maintain a school of fifty poor children for a number of years.

* See page 119. The legacy of Capt. Owen, though originally, about $750, was much diminished by the depreciation of the paper currency, during the war.

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Dr. McKnight's health being impaired early in the year 1792, by his unwearied and arduous labours, it became evident that he was no longer able to preach three times on each Sabbath, as he had faithfully done from the time of his settlement. The congregations, earnestly desirous of maintaining evening service, to which they had been long accustomed, determined to call a third minister. A joint meeting being held for this purpose, on the 29th day of August, in the year last mentioned, a call was unanimously voted to the writer of this memoir, at that time a licentiate of the Presbytery of Lewes, of which his father, then recently deceased, had been a member. He accepted the call November 20th, 1792; arrived at New York, to enter on his labours, on the 3d day of January, 1793; and was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed collegiate pastor with Dr. Rodgers and Dr. McKnight, on the 5th day of June following.

In the month of November, 1794, the College of New Jersey, and the Presbyterian Church in the United States, were deprived by death of one of their distinguished ornaments, the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon. The trustees of the college immediately took measures for paying a suitable tribute of respect to his memory. For this purpose Dr. Rodgers was requested to prepare and deliver a funeral discourse. He accordingly prepared, and at the next meeting of the board, on the 6th of May following, delivered a sermon on Matthew xxv. 21, which was soon afterwards printed, under the title of "The Faithful Servant Rewarded;" and which was subsequently prefixed to Woodward's edition of Dr. Witherspoon's works. This sermon will probably be pronounced by discerning

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readers the most respectable publication, in a literary view, that the author ever made.

In the year 1796, it became apparent that a third church was much wanted, to supply more particularly the inhabitants of the north-eastern part of the city, who could not be accommodated in either of the other churches. When this fact began to engage the general attention of the congregations, and plans to be formed for attaining the object, Henry Rutgers, Esq., a gentleman of great wealth and liberality, who was then in connexion with the Reformed Dutch Church, with his accustomed munificence, made a deed of gift to the trustees of the First Presbyterian church of an ample lot of ground at the corner of Rutgers and Henry streets, on which to erect the contemplated edifice. The generous donation was gratefully accepted; subscriptions were immediately commenced for defraying the expenses of the building; and early in the spring of the year 1797, Dr. Rodgers had the pleasure of laying the corner-stone of a third Presbyterian church on the spot just mentioned. The work was carried on with expedition; and on the 13th day of May, 1798, it was opened for public worship. In this introductory service, Dr. Rodgers presided, and delivered a sermon on the occasion from Haggai ii. 7: "And I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts." The greater part of the pews were immediately taken, and the church became filled with worshippers quite as soon as could have been rationally expected.

In the autumn of the year 1799, the Doctor, finding the infirmities of age sensibly to increase, thought it his duty to relinquish the Thursday eve-

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ning lecture, which, with unwearied diligence and great usefulness, he had maintained for more than thirty years. He communicated this intention to his colleagues, and suggested to them the propriety of their undertaking and continuing this part of his labour. They readily assented to the proposal; and the service was continued by them, in a form somewhat different from that in which he had conducted it, as long as the churches remained united.

The ministrations requisite for carrying on the stated service of three churches becoming every day, from the natural increase of the city, more extensive, multiplied, and laborious, it was judged expedient to call a fourth minister. Accordingly, after the usual preliminary steps, the congregations were convened, in joint meeting, on the 5th day of August, 1805, when they unanimously made choice of the Rev. Dr. Philip Milledoler, then pastor of the Third Presbyterian church in the city of Philadelphia, to be one of their collegiate pastors; with a view, however, to his taking the church in Rutgers street under his more particular care, and being considered, if a separation of the churches should ever take place, as its sole pastor. The call for Dr. Milledoler was regularly prosecuted before the Presbytery of Philadelphia; and he having accepted it, was installed in the church in Rutgers street on the 19th of November following.

This measure proved most auspicious to the spiritual interests of that part of the city. Few instances have occurred of a more useful ministry than that of Dr. Milledoler in this church. The work of the Lord prospered abundantly in his hands. The number, both of stated worshippers and of communicants, rapidly increased; and from

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being small and feeble when he entered on the pastoral charge, it became, in less than seven years, one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the United States.

Hitherto the three churches in Wall street, Beekman street, and Rutgers street, were united. There was one board of trustees, and one bench of elders, over the whole. So that, though worshipping in three houses, they were, properly speaking, but one church. And each of the ministers (excepting Dr. Milledoler, the peculiarity of whose call placed him in different circumstances from his colleagues) was equally connected with all the congregations. The inconveniences attending this arrangement, both to the ministers and the people, were many and serious. These inconveniences had been long seen and deplored. But the difficulty of removing the cause of them, seemed almost insurmountable. A large number of the people were so much attached to the union of the congregations, to which they had been long accustomed, that there appeared little hope of being able to overcome their prejudices on this subject. The formation of the Cedar street church, in the autumn of 1808, as a separate pastoral charge; the calling of their minister; and the entire and most happy success which attended their undertaking, drew the attention of numbers to the subject, who had never thought of it seriously before. The result was, that the opinions of many in favour of a union of churches, were altered; and that measures were taken, in the winter and spring of the year 1809, for dividing the united churches into three separate pastoral charges. These measures issued in the attainment of the object, in the month of April, of that year; when a majority of the congregations,

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at meetings both jointly and separately held, voted for the proposed separation, which the Presbytery sanctioned and ratified, at a meeting in Elizabethtown, on the 26th day of that month. In the arrangements which attended this separation, Dr. Rodgers continued his pastoral relation both to the Wall street and Brick churches; Dr. McKnight, with leave of the Presbytery, resigned his charge, and removed in a few months afterwards, to Pennsylvania;* and the writer of this memoir was liberated from his pastoral relation to the Brick church, and became collegiate pastor of the church in Wall street only. The arrangement which had been stipulated in Dr. Milledoler's call, took place, of course, with respect to him.

Though this separation was not effected without considerable opposition and difficulty, it was attended, on the whole, with much less of both than might have been expected. The agitations which it produced have gradually subsided; and now, the experience of many years, it is believed, has so far disclosed the advantages of separate pastoral charges, as to leave few persons under the influence of hostility, or even of doubt, toward the measure adopted. No man, unquestionably, who witnessed the scene, would ever again lift his hand in favour of associating several congregations under the same pastors.

In the beginning of the winter of 1809, and 1810, the congregation worshipping in Wall street, determined to take down their house of worship,

* Dr. McKnight, after leaving New York, resided in Chambersburg, in Pennsylvania, for a number of years. He was, undoubtedly, one of the ablest and soundest divines in the Presbyterian church.

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which had become too old and tottering to be any longer occupied with safety, and to erect a new one on the same site. The requisite preliminary measures having been taken, the corner-stone of the new building was laid on the 21st of March, 1810. On this interesting occasion, Dr. Rodgers attended, bending under the weight of years. It had been the earnest wish of many, that in commencing the rebuilding of the original church, to which he had first borne the pastoral relation, and which was surrounded with the sepulchres of those who had called and welcomed him to the city, he should lay the first stone. His infirmities, however, rendered this impossible. It was laid by the writer of the present volume; his venerable colleague being only able to favour the solemnity with his presence and his benediction.

While the edifice thus commenced was erecting, or rather more than three months before the erection of it was begun, the congregation worshipped in the French Episcopal church, Du St. Esprit, in Pine street, which, on application, was politely and liberally granted by the vestry for their use. That place of worship was occupied by the Presbyterian congregation from the 1st day of December, 1809, till the 11th day of August, 1811, on the latter of which days, the new edifice in Wall street, was first opened for the worship of God.* But the venerable servant of Christ, who had witnessed the commencement of the building, and who had taken a deep interest in its progress, was no longer a partaker in the services of an earthly sanctuary. Before the arrival of that day, he had

* The new church in Wall street was opened, by the writer of this memoir, with a sermon from 2 Chron. vi. 41.

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been translated to the services and the joys of a better sanctuary on high.

A few weeks after the commencement of the new building in Wall street, Dr. Rodgers had the pleasure of being present at the laying of the corner-stone of a sixth* Presbyterian church, in Spring street, in the city of New York. The short prayer which he made, on this occasion, in the open air, was, so far as is recollected, the last public service that he ever performed. He was never able, after that day, to perform any official duty, excepting those, which admitted of being attended in his own house.

The infirmities of Dr. Rodgers led the members of the Brick Church, of which, after the separation, he was the sole pastor, to look out for further ministerial aid. Accordingly in the month of May, 1810, they gave a unanimous call to Mr. Gardiner Spring,† a licentiate from Massachusetts, who had preached to them for a few weeks. Mr. Spring accepted their call, and was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed collegiate pastor of that church, with Dr. Rodgers, on the 8th day of August following. The Doctor attended with his brethren, on this interesting occasion, and united, for the last time, in the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery; but was not able to take any other part in the services of the day. During the few months afterward that he lived, he took his young colleague by the hand with paternal solici-

* The church erected by the Irish Presbyterian congregation, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. McNeice and which had been opened in the summer of the preceding year, was the fifth.

† Now the Rev. Dr. Spring, of whose reputation as a pastor and writer, it is unnecessary to speak.

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tude and affection; discovered great anxiety to promote his usefulness; and rejoiced in his talents and success.

CHAPTER VIII.

His last Illness and Death.

THE decline of Dr. Rodgers was remarkably gradual. In the month of December, 1803, he informed the church session, that "on account of his age, and growing infirmities, he was no longer able to preach more than once on the Lord's day;" and requested that such measures might be taken to obtain additional supplies for the pulpit, as his failure to perform full service rendered necessary. On which it was resolved unanimously: "That the session entertain a high and grateful sense of the long and faithful services of Dr. Rodgers; and though they deeply regret that his infirmities will deprive the churches of a portion of his usual labours; yet they are persuaded that he ought to be excused from such a portion of his ministrations as he may not find himself able, without difficulty, to perform; and that measures ought to be adopted, as soon as convenient, to procure further supplies for the pulpits."

In addition to this decline of bodily vigour, which rendered a partial retirement from public service necessary, his mind began to discover marks of decay. His memory, as usual, was the first of his mental powers which manifested a failure. About the time when he withdrew from the

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second service on the Sabbath, he commenced the use of notes in preaching. Through his whole ministerial life, prior to this period, he had been in the habit of delivering his sermons in a degree *memoriter*, that is, he in general wrote with care, the substance of what he delivered, and afterwards read it over with sufficient frequency to impress upon his memory the whole of the matter, and, to a certain extent, though not servilely, the language, which he had committed to paper. This was his constant habit anterior to the year 1803. In that year, when he was in the seventy-seventh year of his age, perceiving that his memory was neither so prompt, nor so faithful, as he had been wont to find it, he began to take his written discourses into the pulpit, and to lay them before him in the delivery. In this habit he continued as long as he was able to preach. Still, however, he was always in a degree animated, and sometimes so much so as to remind his more aged hearers of the ardent and impassioned manner of his early life.

In the summer of 1809, such was the feebleness of his body, that it became difficult, not to say almost impossible, for him to ascend the pulpit, and, even when he had reached it, the failure of his memory, especially at some times, was so great, that he was unable to go through the service without giving more or less pain, both to himself and his hearers. In September, of that year, he preached his last sermon. Nothing remarkable attended this service Neither he nor the congregation considered it, at the time, as likely to be the last; but so it proved. A variety of circumstances concurred with the gradual decline of his strength, to prevent his ever entering the pulpit again.

On the first Sabbath of the following December,

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the Lord's Supper was administered in the French Church, in which the congregation then worshipped. Occasions of this kind never failed to excite in Dr. Rodgers peculiar tenderness of feeling, and to draw from him his most affectionate and interesting addresses. On this occasion, he forgot, for a moment, his infirmities, and attempted to serve a table. But his recollection so entirely failed him, in the midst of the service, that it was with the utmost difficulty, and not without important omissions, that he got through it. Seldom has a more affecting scene been exhibited. The tears of hundreds witnessed their mingled emotions of respect and sympathy, toward a beloved pastor, whom they saw sinking into the grave.

In the year 1810, nothing remarkable occurred, concerning the subject of this memoir, excepting his attendance, as related in the last chapter, at the laying of the corner-stones of the Wall street, and Spring street churches. His daily decline, both in bodily and mental strength, in the course of this year, was perceptible and distressing. It grew more and more difficult for him to walk abroad, until toward the close of the year, when his feebleness became so extreme, that he no longer attempted to leave his house. And early in January of the following year, at the solicitation of his family, he was prevailed upon to retire to his chamber, which he never again quitted, excepting to walk for a few moments into an adjoining apartment, till his death.

For about six weeks before his death, he was confined almost entirely to his bed. During this period, his memory was so far impaired, that he often could not recollect the names, and sometimes appeared scarcely to recognize the persons, of his

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most intimate friends. On one occasion he did not appear distinctly to know even his own son, when he made one of his daily visits. But it is a fact, that even when his recollection was thus far weakened, with respect to the nearest and dearest temporal objects, it was nearly as prompt and faithful as ever with respect to spiritual and eternal things. He never appeared, for a moment, to forget his God and Saviour.* In the most reduced state of his mental powers, he caused his family to be convened in his chamber, morning and evening, and prayed with them in a tender, connected, and edifying manner. And when he could no longer recognize the name or the countenance of an intimate friend, whom he almost daily saw, he could speak of the Lord Jesus Christ; quote passages of Scripture, which relate to his personal glory, and his gracious benefits; pour out the fulness of a heart breathing after the holy joys of his presence; and recommend him to those with whom he conversed; not indeed so fluently or uninterruptedly as in his ordinary health, but in a manner truly gratifying to those around him.

Facts of this kind are neither new nor uncom-

* It is pleasing to reflect, that this case is by no means a singular one. An eminently pious minister, in a neighbouring state, who had passed a long life of more than ordinary devotedness to the cause of his Divine Master, had so far lost his memory, a short time before his death, as not to know his own children, or even to recollect that he had children. A Christian friend asked him, on a particular occasion, whether he knew such a child, or such a neighbour. His reply, in each case, was, "No, I did not know that I had such a child, or such a neighbour." His friend then said, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" He replied, immediately, and with strong emotion, "Oh yes; I know Him; He is my best friend!"

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mon. An eminent physician of our own country, has said, "I never met with a single instance in which the moral or religious faculties were impaired in old people. In the course of my inquiries I heard of a man of one hundred and one years of age, who declared that he had forgotten every thing he had ever known, except his God." The same writer, in another place, tells us, "I once knew a man who discovered no one mark of reason, who possessed the moral sense or faculty in so high a degree, that he spent his whole life in acts of benevolence. He had no idea of time, but what was suggested to him by the returns of the stated periods for public worship, in which he appeared to take great delight. He spent several hours of every day in devotion."* The influence of constant habit in preserving an aptitude and readiness, as well as capacity, for this class of exercises, as suggested by this writer, is, no doubt, great. The exercises of piety are among the few which aged people, who have any taste for them, never intermit; but rather abound in, more and more, as they advance in life. There is, however, another consideration, on which still more stress ought to be laid, in accounting for the fact in question. The commencement, the maintenance, and the progress of real piety, in any heart, are the result of Divine influence. We no where have a promise, that the intellectual powers of the pious shall be preserved unimpaired, until their translation to a better world; but we have a promise, that "He who has begun a good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' It would, doubt-

* Rush's Medical Inquiries and Observations, vol. i. p. 442; and vol. ii. p. 12, 13, second edition.

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less, be as easy for Omnipotence to continue a capacity for one class of exercises as for another; but as his promise has secured this blessing in one case, and not in another; and as the consolations which result from moral and religious sources are much more desirable and important, in the evening of life, than those which are connected with intellectual activity, it appears in every respect worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness, to ascribe the acknowledged fact of which we are speaking, to the benign and gracious agency of Him, who has said, to every child of his grace, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." But to return to the venerable subject of this memoir.

In the evening preceding his death, he prayed with his family for the last time. After a few short petitions of the usual kind for their temporal and spiritual welfare, he prayed fervently and affectionately for the congregations which had been so long under his pastoral case. Having dwelt in a number of appropriate and connected sentences on this topic, he passed on to other subjects of petition; but immediately returned to the "dear people of his charge," and, with increasing fervour of manner, prayed for them a second time. Nay, after a few intervening sentences relating to other objects, as if unable to take leave of the subject, he introduced a third time, with as much affection and copiousness as before, his "beloved people;" and with earnest entreaties that the Holy Spirit might be poured out upon them, and that they might be more and more united in affection, and built up in holiness, he closed the last social prayer that he ever made.

The next morning, after being raised up and placed in his easy chair for a few moments, while

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his bed was made, he requested, on lying down again, that the family might be convened, as usual, for the purpose of praying with them. When it was suggested that he was too much exhausted, and that he had better wait a short time, until he should recover a little after his recent exertion, he acquiesced, but soon fell into a gentle slumber, and did not mention the subject afterwards.

Towards three o'clock, in the afternoon of that day, he became in a small degree restless, and manifested symptoms of approaching dissolution. His colleague was immediately sent for, and in a few minutes entered the room. He found him unable to speak, but had the pleasure of perceiving that he knew him, and by signs, as well as by his countenance, that he enjoyed his wonted hope and consolation, and that he wished him to pray with him. A short prayer was accordingly offered up; and the venerable servant of Jesus Christ, without again recovering his speech, was, about four o'clock, P. M., on the 7th day of May, 1811, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, and the sixty-third year of his ministry, quietly released from his mortal tabernacle, and translated to his eternal rest.

The officers of the churches to which the deceased had sustained the pastoral relation, on being informed of his death, immediately convened; and having communicated to his widow and family their wishes that the care and expense of the funeral might be left with them, proceeded to take order on the subject. The funeral was attended on Thursday, the 9th of May. Scarcely ever was there seen in New York so large a concourse of real mourners. The corpse was taken into the Brick church, while an impressive funeral oration was delivered by Dr. Milledoler, and was

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afterwards deposited in a vault in the yard of that church. The pulpits of all the Presbyterian churches in the city were hung in mourning on the occasion; and on the succeeding Sabbath, in most, if not all of those churches, funeral sermons were delivered—a specimen of which will be subjoined to this volume.

CHAPTER IX.

His general Character.

BEFORE the writer undertakes to sketch the general character of his venerable colleague, to the commemoration of which he has devoted the present volume, he begs leave to offer the testimony of some others on the same subject. By inserting the communications which follow, he has no doubt he shall afford pleasure to every reader.

Happening to be in Philadelphia a few days after the death of Dr. Rodgers, he addressed the following letter to that enlightened physician and philanthropist, who more than any other individual, deserves to be styled the Father of Medical Science in America, and who was not ashamed to be called a Christian:

"*Philadelphia*, May 25, 1811.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have resolved to present to the public some account of the life and character of my late colleague, the Rev. Dr. Rodgers.

"Having frequently heard you speak of an ac-

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quaintance, which, from early life, you enjoyed with that venerable man, and tell a number of anecdotes which did him honour, will you allow me to solicit from you a communication, containing such facts and remarks as may occur to your recollection, and appear proper to be introduced into the proposed account? It is my wish to record your testimony with that of some other distinguished characters, in an attempt to do honour to the memory of a minister of Jesus, who was eminently useful while he lived, and whose labours and example will not, I trust, cease to be useful for many years to come.

"I am, dear sir, with high respect,

"Your obliged friend and humble servant,

"SAMUEL MILLER."

"DR. RUSH."

In consequence of this request, the following communication was, in a short time afterwards received.

"*Philadelphia*, June 7th, 1811.

"DEAR SIR,

"I regret that I shall not be able to fulfil your wishes in such a manner, as to render my small tribute of respect and affection to our departed friend, worthy of a place in your account of his life and character.

"My first knowledge of the late Rev. Dr. Rodgers was at the Rev. Dr. Finley's school, in Cecil county, in Maryland, in the year 1756. He was a member of a Presbytery which met statedly in Dr. Finley's church, in the neighbourhood of the school. During the sitting of the Presbytery, he, together with several other clergymen, always

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lodged at Dr. Finley's house. He likewise assisted the Doctor occasionally in the exercises which usually accompany the commemoration of the Lord's Supper in the Presbyterian church, at which time he was always a guest in the Doctor's family. In all these ecclesiastical visits, he endeared himself to the little boys that boarded in the Doctor's house, by finding out and calling them by their names; by conversing with them upon the subjects of their studies; and, when called upon to pray in the family, by offering up the most fervent supplications to the throne of grace, for their temporal and eternal welfare. His sermons were likewise very acceptable to us, because they were more accommodated to our capacities, and delivered in a more impressive and affectionate manner, than those of most of the ministers that occasionally filled our preceptor's pulpit. The respect and attachment I thus early conceived for our excellent friend, grew with my years, and was much strengthened by the connexion which took place between me and his son, the present worthy Dr. John R. B. Rodgers, from his studying medicine under my direction. In all the Doctor's visits to Philadelphia, he never failed to dine, or pass an evening, in my family, in which he was always a welcome and agreeable guest.

"I have great pleasure in recollecting, not only his pleasant and instructive conversations, but many agreeable anecdotes I have heard of his piety, prudence, and good sense. I shall mention two or three of the latter. Some years ago I was sent for to visit a Mrs. Kirkpatrick, of this city, who told me she had spent the early part of her life in the congregation of the Rev. Mr. Rowan, of Neshaminy, at whose school Dr. Rodgers receiv-

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ed his academical learning; and that she had often contrived on a Sunday, when she went to church, to walk a few feet behind him, when he was but fourteen years of age, on purpose to hear his pious and sensible conversation with his school-mates.

"A member of the Doctor's congregation once complained to him, that his prayers were too methodical, and that they appeared to be studied. 'You are right, sir,' said the Doctor, 'my prayers are studied. Would you have me offer God that which costs me nothing?'

"In one of his last visits to Philadelphia, he informed me, that when he resided in Newcastle county, in the then three lower counties, as they were called, upon the Delaware, he offended a part of his congregation, by voting at a disputed election for sheriff, in consequence of which, he said, he had never voted at a general election afterwards. In this act of self-denial, he discovered a practical knowledge of the scale of duties; for how feeble is the obligation in a minister of the gospel, to promote the supposed prosperity of his country by a solitary vote, compared with his obligation to preserve a commanding and undivided influence over his whole congregation, in order more effectually to direct their attention to subjects of an imperishable nature!

"Of his Christian and ministerial character, I need say nothing to you, who have been so long, and so happily, united with him in parochial labours. To both he added, in an uncommon degree, the manners of a fine gentleman. Such was his intuitive knowledge and strict attention to time and place, in his intercourse with the world, that he not only pleased, but I never heard of his having, even from carelessness, or inadvertency,

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offended a human being in the course of his life. Indeed, his manners seemed to be in strict unison with his pure and exemplary morals. Considering how little he was indebted to instruction, and fashionable company, in the early part of his life, for the singular polish, and charm of his manners, and how many men, with all the advantages of high birth, and constant as well as early intercourse with elegant society, are deficient in the air, and ease, and all the proprieties of behaviour, it would seem that a real gentleman is as much the child of nature, as a poet or a painter.

"The following extract from a letter written to me upon my marriage, will show the happy mixture of piety, with the friendship with which the Doctor honoured me.

'*New York*, January 30, 1776.

'MY DEAR SIR,

'With great sincerity I congratulate you upon your late agreeable marriage; nor is there any happiness, temporal or spiritual, that I do not most cordially wish you and your amiable consort. May the best of Heaven's blessings attend you both, through all the various scenes of future life! May they meet you in rich variety and plenty in every change, and hand you both, after a life of usefulness and comfort, into the mansions of eternal rest!'

"In the summer of 1777, the Doctor's son, while my pupil, was attacked with an obstinate and dangerous fever, which he caught in attending a crowded military hospital in Philadelphia. During his illness, I received two letters from the Doctor, extracts from which will show in a very

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striking manner, the union of paternal solicitude with Christian resignation.

'*Kingston*, June 3d, 1777.

'My dear Sir,

'I wrote you a few lines this morning, by an express to the delegates of this state in Congress; but he is not to return immediately, and such is my solicitude to hear from my dear Johnny, that the bearer goes on purpose with this letter, and another to Mr. Smith, to bring me news from him. Is he yet among the living, or is he numbered with the dead? tender and solemn questions, indeed, respecting an only son, and a favourite child! But it is the Lord, and it becomes me to submit. Pray, despatch the bearer as speedily as possible.'

'*Kingston*, June 11th, 1777.

'My dear Sir,

'With inexpressible solicitude I am waiting the return of the express I despatched to Philadelphia, last week, to hear the fate of my dear son. I expect him to-day. O! that he may bring me favourable accounts; but the will of the Lord be done! I hope the express will bring me a line from you. I beg you will be kind enough to give me as particular a state of his case, as your time will admit, by the first post, whether dead or alive.'

"I shall only add an extract of a letter I received from the Doctor, after he heard of the recovery of his son.

'*Kingston*, June 17th, 1777.

'My dear Sir,

'Accept, I entreat you, of my most cordial and

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affectionate gratitude, for your care of my dear son, in his late dangerous illness. I shall never forget it. And pray thank his kind landlady, and his fellow-students, most affectionately in my name, for their kindness to him. O that I had it in my power to reward them all! My God, however, I trust will. I most ardently pray he may! Give my love to Johnny. My heart is too full to write to him, by this post; and he, perhaps, is too weak to read a letter from me. Tell him we are well!'

"With great respect, I am, dear Sir,

"Your sincere friend,

"BENJAMIN RUSH."

"REV. DR. MILLER."

A request similar to that which is above recorded, as addressed to Dr. Rush, was also addressed to the Rev. Doctor Livingston, the venerable President of Queen's College, New Brunswick, and Professor of Theology in the Reformed Dutch Church, in the United States. The letter from which the following extracts are taken, was intended as an apology for not complying with this request; and of course, was not designed for publication. But it is presumed that every reader will concur in opinion with the compiler, who was not able to reconcile it either with his judgment or his feelings, to conceal from the public eye such paragraphs as these.

"With affectionate regard and tender emotions I attended to your letter. I entered fully into your meaning, and felt happy in the hope that it might be in my power, in some measure, to meet your wishes. I owe to you a compliance with every request. I owe to the memory of your venerable colleague, to assist in rendering the history of his

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exemplary life acceptable and useful. And I owe to the cause of the Divine Redeemer to suggest, if possible, such reflections and observations as ought to be blended with the memoirs of a man, who served his Lord so long with diligence and success. Under the impression of all these motives, which upon reading your acceptable favour, were indulged without restraint, I immediately viewed the subject, with an ardent desire to recollect and arrange something which might answer your expectations. But I find myself disappointed. The most eminent characters, and perhaps the most profitable in their stations, are, for the greater part, so uniform in their course, and exhibit so few changes, that there is scarcely a prominent point to be discovered, in which the biographer can rest, or an insulated spot to which particular remarks can suitably apply.

"A river which for ever flows in one direction, and is always of the same depth, without a cataract, cascade, or angle, is justly considered the most profitable stream, and may be eulogized as a source of wealth in commerce; as a treasure to a nation; but it can never employ the detached touches of the pencil; it absolutely evades all partial descriptions.

"I placed my old friend full before me, and viewed him distinctly as a man, as a Christian, as a divine, and as a preacher. In every article he appeared conspicuous, amiable, and excellent; but in all of them he was for ever the same. One general encomium comprises the whole, and includes all that can be said. Few of the human family have passed through a long life so blameless and unimpeached, so undeserving of reproof, and shielded even from slander. Few of the fol-

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lowers of Immanuel have lived more habitually by faith, or taken up their cross and followed their Master with more cheerful and signal obedience. Among divines there may be those whose opportunities for obtaining information, whose extensive reading, and perhaps stronger powers of mind, have rendered them superior to him in science; but there are not many who have surpassed him in clear and decisive views of the doctrines of grace, or an ardent and persevering attachment to the fundamental truths of the gospel. In the pulpit there are prodigies of eloquence, men who soar above the ordinary standard; whose elocution, energy, and pleasing address, astonish and captivate their audience; but these of necessity must be few, and are not always the most powerful or successful in converting sinners or edifying believers. Our departed friend was never classed among celebrated orators. An impediment in pronouncing some words prevented him frequently from indulging in a full and uninterrupted flow of speech; but he was always in earnest; he believed what he spoke; and with a feeling heart, susceptible of tender affections, he was, especially when in the prime of life, an impressive, acceptable, and excellent preacher."

"As to anecdotes, of which, in a series of mutual intercourse for nearly half a century, there must have occurred many that would be worth preserving, I cannot at present call any correctly to remembrance, or at least sufficiently recollect them, in their striking points, to attempt a detail."

In compliance with request, the Rev. Mr. Forrest, a respectable minister of the Associate Reformed Church, made the following communication, which is inserted with pleasure, as another

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valuable attestation, in concurrence with the preceding.

"A few years ago, I related to Dr. Rodgers an anecdote of a Scots clergyman, who, while preaching from these words, Heb. xi. 32, 'And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon,' &c., observed, 'My brethren, here are some very rough-spun saints; really, if the Spirit of God had not decided this matter, it would have been hard work to have admitted them among the number. But, my brethren, this teaches us that, if we get to heaven, we will see many folks there that we did not expect.' Dr. Rodgers observed, 'Yes, my friend, I expect to see in heaven among other wonders, three very great ones; some there whom I did not expect to have seen there; others not there, whom I had great expectations of seeing there; but the greatest wonder of all, will be, to see myself there, the chief of sinners, pardoned and sanctified through the grace of God!'"

"I have often admired the talents displayed by Dr. Rodgers, while he presided in the board of directors of the Missionary Society. Having, in my younger days, been often led, by curiosity, to attend the meetings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Synods of both branches of the Secession, I may be allowed to express an opinion concerning this subject. Never have I, in any of these courts, seen a moderator who could preserve decorum, interest the members of court in the business before them, and command the respect and affection of members, equal in any degree to Dr. Rodgers."

"I am not in communion with that church to which Dr. Rodgers belonged, and never had an

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opportunity of hearing him preach more than once. My acquaintance with him commenced in 1802, when he was in the decline of life; but it was my happiness to enjoy his private conversation for a few years; and I always considered him as a singular blessing to the American church."

Having presented these testimonies, from different and impartial witnesses, an attempt will now be made, to portray those remarkable features in the character of this eminent servant of Jesus Christ, which so highly distinguished him, and which contributed so largely, under God, both to the acceptance and the utility of his labours. For it is a fact not to be disguised, that the reputation, the influence, and the usefulness of Dr. Rodgers, considered jointly, were greater than usually fall to the lot of one, who had no higher claims than he, to strong and original powers of mind, and to profound learning. Shall we say, then, that his reputation was undeserved; or that it rested upon an unsubstantial basis? By no means. It was merited. It had a solid foundation. And it may not be altogether without benefit to inquire, *why it was*, that this venerable minister of the gospel, was more known, more honoured, more influential, both in the church and in civil society, and more extensively useful, than many other clergymen, who ranked higher on the scale of native genius, and were more conspicuous for their literary acquirements. This question will be answered, by exhibiting and illustrating the most remarkable features of his character, under a series of heads.

I. And here, the first place shall be assigned to his *ardent and uniform piety*. This was the grand ornament, which appeared in all that he

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said or did; and which shed a lustre on his character, in whatever point of light it was contemplated. Common sense dictates to every man, that the minister of religion ought to be truly religious; that he who makes it the business of his life to explain the doctrines, enforce the precepts, and recommend the Spirit, of Christ, ought himself, in some good measure, to exemplify what he preaches, in his own temper and conduct. Accordingly, as the evident want of piety is one of the last deficiencies, that can or ought to be pardoned in a clergyman; so the habitual display of warm, practical, consistent piety, in the sacred profession, is of more importance in every point of view to ministerial reputation and usefulness, than is generally imagined. The pious love it; formal professors approve it; and even the most determined votaries of profligacy, or of infidelity, secretly revere it, and, like Herod, pay it a trembling homage.

Such piety, even in clergymen, is much more rare than is commonly believed. It will be observed, the assertion is, that such piety is more rare. None will suppose that a general reflection is intended on the profession of which the writer is a member; and still less that he imagines himself entitled to take the place of censor among his brethren. But fidelity to the Master's cause is paramount to all other obligations. "The piety of some," as a late excellent biographer remarks, "is *official* rather than *personal*. It consists in certain exercises and appearances, which are resigned with the occasions that require them: and in company they are the merry companions, the temporizing associates; in the house, the cruel husbands, the negligent fathers, the tyrannical

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master."* The piety of a much larger class of ministers, though real, sincere, and in the main, exemplary, is still mixed with so many levities, and littlenesses, and admits so many of the phrases, the habits, and the calculations of worldly men, into their language and daily deportment, that the lustre, both of the Christian and the ambassador of Christ, cannot fail of being obscured, and even tarnished.

But we have reason to rejoice, that the piety of a goodly number is of a higher order. Their deportment in private, corresponds with their language in public. Their preaching is, in some good measure, exemplified in their lives. They recommend religion as much on the other six days of the week, as on the Sabbath. Their piety is of that uniform, unaffected, impressive character, which, while it assumes nothing, is seen wherever they go; which combines evangelical seriousness with simplicity, benevolence, and cheerfulness; which exhibits as much of the meekness and humility of the Christian, as of his heavenly mindedness; and which continually shows itself to originate rather from the heart than from the office. Such a character, speaking after the manner of men, is irresistible. It is loved by the good, and revered by all. And while the frivolous witling, and the profane scorner, may occasionally sneer at what they call its "strictness, and its "puritanism," they find a testimony in their own consciences in its favour. They secretly honour it, as much more conformed to the Spirit, and the example of Christ, than the character of the clerical *bon vivant*, who has no other mark of his

* Jay's Life of Winter.

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sacred office than a black dress; and on whom, while they court his company in the hour of festivity and mirth, they bestow none of their real confidence or esteem.

This was one of the great charms of Mr. Rodgers's character. The fervour and uniformity of his piety seldom failed to impress all who approached him. It not only appeared conspicuous in the pulpit; dictating his choice of subjects, his mode of treating them, and his affectionate earnestness of manner; but it attended him wherever he went, and manifested itself in whatever he did. In the house of mourning it shone with distinguished lustre. Nor was this all. He probably never was known to enter a human dwelling, for the purpose of paying an ordinary visit, without saying something, before he left it, to recommend the Saviour and his service. Seldom did he sit down at the convivial table, without dropping at least a few sentences adapted to promote the spiritual benefit of those around him. The transient visiter; the momentary interview in the street; the hasty call of business; the ride of pleasure; the inquiry respecting the health of his friends; the answer to inquiries respecting his own health; the mode of telling and of hearing news; the valedictory benediction—could all bear witness to the habitual devotion and spirituality of his mind, and his constant desire to be active in his Master's service. In all the domestic relations of life, piety pervaded and regulated his conduct; controlling a temper naturally hasty and irascible, and prompting to the affectionate courtesies of Christian benevolence. He seemed never, for a moment, to forget that he was a servant of Jesus Christ; a minister of Him who went about doing good to

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the souls and bodies of men; and whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his Father, and finish his work. The writer well remembers a circumstance, which, though small in itself, was considered, by an impartial observer, as not a little significant. A young clergyman, who had paid a short visit to the city, and who had enjoyed two or three pleasant interviews with Dr. Rodgers, a few years before his death, at the close of the last interview, rose and offered him his hand for the purpose of bidding him farewell. The Doctor took it, and squeezing it affectionately, with a very few simple words, expressive of pious hope, and tender benediction, dismissed him. The clergyman, on retiring, inquired, whether what he had just witnessed was the Doctor's common manner of taking leave of his friends; adding, that he had seldom seen any thing so much like the pious and primitive style of an apostle before. There have been better days of the church, when such things were not rare. Would to God they were less so now!

It scarcely need be added, because every one acquainted with the nature of vital piety will take for granted, that the Doctor was habitually attentive to those means which God is wont to bless for maintaining the power of religion in the soul. He had a deep impression of the efficacy of prayer; and he abounded in this duty, as well as in the other duties of the closet. Besides the stated and ordinary exercises of devotion, he set apart, in every year, a number of days of fasting and special prayer. On these occasions, as was observed in the preceding chapter, he was accustomed, as a means of more deeply impressing his own mind, to commit to writing some of his reflections and

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prayers, and afterwards to review them, as a record of his former exercises, and as a pledge of his subsequent fidelity.

II. Another quality in Dr. Rodgers, which, next to his piety, contributed to his high reputation, was his *prudence*. By prudence here is meant, not that spirit of cold and carnal calculation, which the world is apt to call by this respectable name, but which the apostle styles "conferring with flesh and blood," and which, perhaps, can be expressed by no single word more appropriate than that of *cunning*. Prudence, in the Scriptural sense of the term, means practical wisdom. The prudent man, in the estimation of Solomon, is one who "looketh well to his goings; who openeth his mouth with wisdom; who foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself. The wise in heart shall be called prudent."* Without this qualification, piety, talents, learning, eloquence, may be, and have not unfrequently been found to be, worse than useless. It is so important to a good minister, that our blessed Lord made a pointed reference to it a part of the very brief exhortation which he addressed to the first ministers whom he sent forth.† And perhaps a venerable clergyman in a neighbouring state, did not go too far, when he said, "I would make a deficiency in prudence, the ground of quite as serious and insurmountable objection against laying hands on a candidate for the ministry, as I would a deficiency in piety or knowledge."

Dr. Rodgers was, remarkably, and characteristically, a prudent man. Few men were more careful to look well to their goings than he. Few men were more wary in foreseeing circumstances

* Proverbs xiv. 15; xvi. 21; xxii. 3. † Matt. x. 26.

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likely to produce embarrassment or difficulty, and in avoiding them. Few men were more cautious of giving unnecessary offence, that the ministry might not be blamed; or more watchful with respect to all those modes of exhibiting truth, or of performing duty, which are calculated to conciliate the differently constituted minds of men. His prudence was daily seen—in denying himself, and the members of his family, those things which, though innocent in themselves, might have made an unfavourable impression, even on a single mind; in the regular and economical management of his temporal affairs; in avoiding those connexions and associations, by which his time might have been injuriously consumed, or his attentions painfully entangled; in parrying, with a mixture of dignity and gentleness, every attack, in mixed companies, which might have led to controversy, especially religious controversy, which he thought seldom failed of proving both unpleasant and mischievous: in dealing gently with the prejudices and the passions of men; in being swift to hear, and slow to speak; in treating character with delicacy, especially the character of the absent; in taking care to hold in awe, and to prevent, rather than be under the necessity of reproving, impertinence, profaneness, and noisy mirth; in turning to the best account the amount of knowledge that he possessed, and forbearing to talk on subjects with which he was imperfectly or but little acquainted; in guarding against that propensity to incessant jesting, in promiscuous company, which lowers the character of so many respectable clergymen; in careful attention to the character of the anecdotes which he related in social circles; in keeping at a distance, without offending, the over-curious, the indelicate,

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and the intruding; in always preferring, where there could not be unanimity of opinion, that course which tended to peace and accommodation; in taking care to select favourable seasons and methods of administering reproof; and, in short, in constantly endeavouring to avoid as much evil, and accomplish as much good, with as little offence to those around him, and as much to their acceptance, as possible. Hence he was able to do a thousand things without exciting the least resentment, which many others could not have accomplished without encountering the most determined opposition and animosity. And hence he rarely found himself in those perplexing and painful situations, to which the indiscreet and unwary are so frequently reduced, to the interruption of their own peace, and to the discredit of religion.

Some of the friends of Dr. Rodgers, indeed, sometimes supposed that he carried his prudence to an extreme; that his caution sometimes degenerated into timidity; and that his fear of giving offence, not unfrequently led him to fall in with the opinions and the measures of others, where his own would have been evidently preferable. To assert that he was perfectly free from this fault; or that any man remarkable for his prudence, was ever perfectly free from it, would be venturing, perhaps, too far. But scarcely any two individuals would, probably, in all cases, agree as to the proper place and limits of the exercise of prudence. In the estimation of some ardent spirits, all caution is timidity; all accommodation, trimming; and every thing called prudence, mere cold and calculating servility. This was not the opinion of Dr. Rodgers. Next to the general principle of vital piety, prudence was his favourite grace: and it must he

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acknowledged, that he exercised it with no ordinary success.

III. A third quality for which this venerable man was remarkable, and which, no doubt, contributed largely to his high reputation, was *the uniform, persevering, and indefatigable character of his ministerial labours.* Some men are not capable of steady and long continued application to the same pursuits. They grow weary of the regular progress of things in their ordinary course; and can only be interested by new plans and undertakings, with which they become dissatisfied in their turn, and exchange them for others. Few things are more apt to interfere with the attainment of great excellence, in any profession, and especially in the clerical profession, than this weakness. It frequently places real genius, and fervent piety in a much lower station, in public opinion, and especially in public usefulness, than is held by decidedly inferior gifts, with a capacity for patient and steady exertion. In fact, this capacity, though, like common sense, it is too apt to be considered as an humble qualification, and to be denied an honourable name; is one of the most important talents that can well be mentioned, in a character destined to enjoy a high and solid reputation, and to be extensively useful to mankind.

Dr. Rodgers possessed and exercised this talent in a remarkable degree. In preaching, in catechizing, in attending on the sick and dying, in all the arduous labours of discipline and government, and in visiting from house to house, he went on with unceasing constancy, year after year, from the beginning to the end of his ministry. He not only abounded in ministerial labours; but he laboured systematically, uniformly, and with unwea-

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ried patience. Difficulties did not usually appal him. Delays did not discourage him. If he were totally disappointed in the result of his exertions in one case, he did not hastily conclude, that all subsequent endeavours in similar cases would be useless. Nay, if he failed of attaining his wishes, ninety and nine times, he did not shrink from the hundredth attempt. Those who found him busily engaged in pursuing a certain regular and judicious course, at one period; would be sure to find him, after a series of years, pursuing, with steady and undeviating steps, the same course. In short, as his learned and excellent friend, Dr. Livingston, observes, he was literally, "for ever the same." Or we may say of him, in nearly the same language which an admirable evangelical biographer, now living, applies to his pious and laborious hero, "Here was a man, for seventy years, unchangeable in all the varieties of life; by the grace of God, holding on his way, without drawing back, or turning aside, or standing still, or seeming to come short; what the Scripture calls a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil."* No wonder that a man of this character, enjoyed in a very high degree the confidence and esteem of all who knew him." No wonder that the churches beheld him, through his long and active life, with growing reverence; and that his brethren regarded him as a kind of clerical pattern. Such characters may be less talked about than some others; they may not see the painter's or the sculptor's art employed to perpetuate the record of their particular achievements; but they have been, in all ages, the chief benefactors of mankind.

* Jay's Life of Winter, p. 231.

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They have been the means of performing, in all nations, the greater part of the solid good that has been done. And, while prodigies of genius have soared and fallen; while intellectual and moral comets have astonished and disappeared; they have held on their steady course, from day to day, and from year to year, enlightening, warming, and blessing the world.

IV. A fourth particular which contributed to the high station of Dr. Rodgers, in public opinion, and especially in the confidence of the pious part of the community, was *the character of his preaching.* The two qualities most remarkable in his preaching, were piety and animation. His sermons were always rich in evangelical truth; and they were generally delivered with a solemnity and earnestness, which indicated a deep impression on his own heart of the importance of what he uttered. And hence, though he was never remarkable for that variety, either in the choice, or the illustration of his subjects which some would have preferred; and though he never gave himself the trouble to attain that polish and elegance of style, to which many bend a large share of attention; still, in the days of his vigour, he was one of the most popular as well as useful preachers in the American Church.

It was said that his sermons were rich in evangelical truth. The subjects which he always treated in the pulpit, were those peculiar and precious doctrines of the gospel, which universal experience proves to be most acceptable and edifying to the pious, and most impressive on the mass of hearers. Whoever went to hear him, at any time, would be sure to find him dwelling chiefly on one or another of the following themes; the federal

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character of Adam, as the covenant head of his seed; the imputation of his sin, when he fell, to all his posterity; the lost and ruined state of man by nature; the doctrine of total depravity; the doctrine of sovereign election to eternal life, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience; the true and proper Divinity of Jesus Christ; the Divine existence in a Trinity of persons; the vicarious sacrifice and atonement of the Saviour; the doctrine of justification by his imputed righteousness alone; the nature and necessity of regeneration, by the Holy Spirit; the necessity of a vital union to Jesus Christ, by faith, in order to our partaking of the benefits of his redemption; the distinguishing character of those who stand in this relation to the Saviour, together with their privileges and duties; the efficacy of prayer; the nature and properties of faith, repentance, hope, and charity; the perseverance and final glorification of the saints; and the endless punishment of those who die impenitent. On these great and fundamental doctrines of Scripture, he not only dwelt much, but almost exclusively. He seldom travelled out of this plain track; not because he was unable; but because early and constant habit had rendered it most familiar to him; because he verily thought it the most profitable course of public instruction; and because his practice of *memoriter* speaking, rendered it more easy for him to prepare discourses on these systematical topics, than on those of a different kind. To which may be added, that his unwearied devotedness to the active duties of his profession, during the greater part of his life, left him but little time for study; and, of course, but little leisure for attempts to entertain his hearers with originality, with profound criti-

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cism, with novelty, or with elegance of composition.

And as the Doctor seldom preached on other subjects than those which have been mentioned; so he adopted that method of handling them, which is most common in the writings of the Puritan divines of the seventeenth century. Owen, Charnock, Flavel, Howe, Bates, Baxter, and Henry, were among his favourite writers. He was fond, not only of their modes of thinking, but also of speaking; and, accordingly, abounded much in what may be called the technical language of doctrinal and practical religion in use in their day. It was his opinion, that evangelical doctrines ought not only to be preached, and preached incessantly; but that they ought also to be expressed in those terms and phrases to which the church has been long used, and which are derived either from the Scriptures themselves, or from the earliest, soundest, and best known, human authorities. This opinion regulated his own practice. No one ever found him affecting novelty, in the representations which he gave of divine truth, either with respect to their substance or their modes of expression, because he considered the old as better; and in the old track he was found for ever walking.

These circumstances, in their combined influence, gave to his preaching peculiar weight and popularity. He selected precisely that plan of sermonizing which was best adapted to his own talents, and best calculated, at once, to suit the mass of hearers, and to answer the great end of preaching. A greater variety in the choice of subjects, and more attention to polish of style, would no doubt have pleased, perhaps edified, a small number of those who attended on his minis-

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trations. But had he attempted this, he would probably have lost a portion of that simple, affectionate, apostolical manner, which so remarkably characterized his pulpit addresses, and which so evidently inspired the confidence, and impressed the hearts of those classes of hearers, whose support always affords the most durable basis of ministerial reputation, as well as usefulness. No man ever enjoyed a very extensive or enviable degree of popularity, as a gospel minister, whose sermons were exclusively adapted to the literary and polished part of his hearers. The wonderful impression of Whitefield's preaching may be ascribed to the plainness and evangelical simplicity of his matter, which was equally suited to all classes, taken in connexion with the unrivalled force and magic of his delivery.

V. This venerable servant of Jesus Christ was also distinguished and honoured for his *great disinterestedness of character*. Of him it might be said with eminent propriety, that he sought, not his own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's. Few men have ever been more free from private and selfish aims, in acting their part in the affairs of the church, than he. His plans, his calculations, his conduct, were ever those of a man whose grand object was the advancement, not of himself, or of a party, but of the Redeemer's kingdom. Of ecclesiastical policy, other than that which sought to promote the peace, the order, the purity, the extension, and the happiness of the church, by the most fair, direct, and honourable means, he evidently knew nothing. In petty schemes for diminishing the influence of his brethren, that he might increase his own; or in the arts of intrigue, to play off contending parties,

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or individuals, as engines for promoting his personal elevation, he was never suspected of engaging. He was ever ready, where an imperious sense of duty did not forbid it, to sacrifice his own feelings and wishes to the union and harmony of the church. He was always a peace-maker; never a divider. His plans were invariably those of Christian benevolence. "No banner was ever raised in his camp, but that of the cross." From envy and jealousy he was remarkably free. He rejoiced in the honour and success of his brethren. And when, toward the close of life, some of the young men, whom he had been instrumental in introducing into the ministry, enjoyed a degree of popularity which might be said, in a degree, to eclipse his own; his most intimate friends never saw him manifest on this account the smallest uneasiness. On the contrary, he appeared to take unfeigned pleasure in witnessing the acceptance of their labours, and in contributing to raise, rather than depress their reputation. He seemed ever ready, with the spirit, to adopt the language of that faithful servant of God, who said, of a greater than himself—"He must increase, but I must decrease."

While this temper carried with it its own reward, in the personal comfort which it produced; it could not fail to promote the honour, and extend the influence, of its possessor. No man ever exhibited, in a remarkable degree, the qualities of disinterestedness and magnanimity, without being followed by the public eye with confidence and affection. Every one who is conscious that his own views are pure, hails such a man as a brother; every one who wishes well to Zion, rejoices in his peace, his prosperity, and his elevation.

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VI. It would be injustice, both to the cause of religion, and to the memory of this excellent man, to omit calling the attention of the reader particularly to *the spotless purity of his moral character.* It might seem, at first view, scarcely necessary, or even proper, to mention this apart from the fervour and uniformity of his piety, before noticed. But when we recollect that some who have professed a warm friendship for vital piety, and who claimed to possess it, have manifested a disposition, in theory as well as in practice, to depreciate morality; and when we call to mind how often ministers and others, in the main hopefully pious, have had the lustre of their reputation obscured, and the extent of their usefulness abridged, by real or supposed deviations from moral correctness; it would be improper to pass, without distinct and very honourable notice, the particular excellence in this respect of the character which we are now contemplating.

The writer presumes that none, who were acquainted with Dr. Rodgers, will charge him with extravagance, when he expresses an opinion, that no man ever passed through a life of eighty-four years with a more immaculate moral character than he. In no one instance was it ever impeached. "It pleased his Divine Master," as Dr. Livingston justly observes, in his letter before quoted, "to shield him even from slander." Considering the unusual activity, as well as length of his life; his constant intercourse with all classes of persons; and the diversified and trying situations in which he was frequently placed—that the lustre of his reputation should never have been, at any period, sullied, even by the breath of suspicion, is truly an extraordinary case, and worthy of being contemplated with grateful pleasure by every friend to the

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honour of the Redeemer's kingdom. The influence of this fact, in securing to him an uncommon share of public confidence, need not be mentioned. In truth, it could not fail of giving to his character that kind of colossal firmness, as well as elevation, which all those who were accustomed to hear his name mentioned in company, perceived it to have acquired.

VII. Dr. Rodgers was further distinguished by a *punctual attendance on the judicatories of the church.* Perhaps no minister in the United States was ever more remarkable than he for a regular and strict regard to this part of his duty. He made it a point never to be absent from the meetings of his brethren, unless sickness, or some other equally imperious dispensation of Providence, rendered his attendance impossible. And when present, in the several ecclesiastical courts, he gave his serious and undivided attention to the business which came before them; and was always ready to take his full share, and more than his share, of the labour connected with that business. In short, the same zeal for the welfare of the church; the same desire to spend and be spent in his Master's service, which animated him in every other department of labour, guided and governed him here. The consequence was, that he became personally known to almost all his brethren in the ministry, of his own denomination, in the United States; that he enjoyed their friendship and confidence; that he kept up a connected and thorough acquaintance with the affairs of the church; that he contributed to strengthen the hands of those with whom he acted; and that, thus, the sphere, both of his honour and his usefulness, was greatly extended. The aggregate value of advantage, which all these circumstances give him, in the course of a

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ministry of between sixty and seventy years, may be more easily imagined than ascertained.

He was accustomed often to lament the negligence of this duty which he observed in many of his brethren; and to remark, that he was persuaded they did not appreciate as they ought the importance, both to themselves and the church, of a regular attendance on judicatories. He more than once declared, that he never knew any minister attain to a large share of influence or weight among his brethren, who was habitually negligent of such attendance. Nay, he thought it, from the very nature of the case, impossible that any one ever should. And there are probably, few points concerning which all the experience of ecclesiastical men more decisively concurs, than in supporting this opinion.*

VIII. The great *liberality of sentiment* which Dr. Rodgers habitually discovered, endeared him to thousands, and contributed not a little to the extension of his influence. Though he was a firm Presbyterian, and a decided Calvinist, he was far, very far from being a bigot. While he abhorred latitudi-

* The writer cannot forbear introducing a similar declaration made by a divine now living, whose opportunities to make observations on this subject, have been of the best kind, and whose character, with all who know him, will add weight to his opinions. "No minister in our connexion has been known by me, who was either very useful or very respectable, that did not give his presence at Presbytery, Synod, or Assembly, whenever that duty became incumbent. The reason of this seems to be, that a neglect in this particular cannot take place without indicating in him who is chargeable with it, a criminal want of zeal for the general interests of the church; and at the same time, it necessarily deprives him of all general influence, confidence, esteem, and affection among his 'brethren.'"—Dr. Green's Charge, at the Ordination of Mr. J. B. Linn, and others, 1799.

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harian indifference, and was ever ready to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; he was quite as ready, at the same time, to take by the hand, as Christian brethren, all who appeared to possess the Spirit of Christ, by whatever name they were called, or however they might differ from him with respect to minor articles of belief. He seldom mentioned the opinions of others in the pulpit; but contented himself with declaring, illustrating, and endeavouring to recommend, what he believed to be the doctrines of Scripture. And, on one occasion, when he was urged by some of the officers of his church to preach against the errors of a particular sect, and to warn his people against them, by name, he utterly refused, saying,—"Brethren, you must excuse me. I cannot reconcile it with my sense either of policy or duty to oppose these people from the pulpit, otherwise than by preaching the truth plainly and faithfully. I believe them to be in error; but let us out-preach them, out-pray them, and out-live them, and we need not fear."

It might have been supposed that toward one denomination, from which, as will be seen from the foregoing pages, he had received, at different times, treatment of which he had reason to complain, he would have been apt to cherish sentiments of fixed animosity. But it was not so. He often spoke of his Episcopal brethren in terms of the most exemplary Christian benevolence; and appeared cordially to rejoice, when he heard that the work of the Lord prospered among them, in any part of the world. He had many affectionate friends of the Episcopal church. He was in the constant habit of visiting a number of families belonging to that church. And when he met with an Episcopalian who appeared to love the truth as it is in Jesus, he seemed to forget

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all distinction of names, and to feel as if he had found a brother, with whom he took as sweet counsel as if he had belonged to his own communion.

In this, as well as in other graces, he evidently grew, as he advanced in life. And toward the close of it, he seemed to take unfeigned and ardent pleasure in the belief, that every person, with whom he fell in company, who spoke seriously, and with apparent emotion on the subject of religion, was a real Christian. It was pleasing, even when there was reason to fear that he carried his favourable estimate too far, to see with what eager delight he recognized every thing which resembled piety, in the numerous individuals with whom he conversed; and how ready he was to embrace in the arms of Christian affection, all persons, of all sects, who manifested any thing like sincere love to the Lord Jesus.

IX. In tracing the remarkable features in the character of this man of God, it would be improper to pass without notice, his temper and habits *with respect to worldly property*. It was supposed by some, that an undue love of money, as well as an irascible temper, was among his natural infirmities. If this were so, it is certain that, by the grace of God, he had gained the victory over both, in a remarkable degree. Few men, in his circumstances, have contrived to give away so much in charity, especially to the sick poor, whom he constantly visited. He seldom went into the house of such a person, without closing the religious exercises which attended the interview, by a donation from his purse. Though he passed through a period, during his residence in New York, in which speculation in stocks, lands, &c., was carried on with a spirit, and to an extent, altogether unprecedented in this country, and scarcely equalled in any other, yet he was en-

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abled wholly to resist the fascination of the day, and to keep himself free from an entanglement so unworthy of a gospel minister. It is observable also, that, when in company, he scarcely ever allowed himself to converse on a subject so common in a commercial community. In the society of his most confidential friends, he appeared always to feel as if he had something infinitely more important to talk of, than the price of stocks, or the most eligible methods of investing money. And, in correspondence with these facts, it is certain, that, with all the regularity and vigilance of his economy, and without meeting with any particular loss sufficiently large to account for such a result, he left, at his decease, less property than, forty-six years before, he had brought to the city.

The writer feels the more ready to mention this trait in the character of Dr. Rodgers, because it has attracted the notice of others, as well as of himself. A distinguished layman, at a distance, who intimately knew, and highly honoured him, in a private letter, addressed to the writer, remarks, "I hope you will not forget to dilate freely upon his voluntary and meritorious comparative poverty, at a time when even clergymen have been infected with the dollar-mania of our country."

It is notorious that the sin of avarice, where it has been allowed to take a firm and governing hold of the mind, is one of those which are peculiarly apt to grow stronger with age, and to reign with a melancholy force in the decline of life. It was directly the reverse with the subject of this memoir. Toward the close of life he was raised above a secular spirit more than ever. And during the two or three last years that he lived, it is a fact, that he seemed to have lost all sense of the value of money, excepting

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as a means of relieving the distress and promoting the happiness of those around him. During that period he distributed the contents of his purse, with a profusion altogether extravagant; insomuch that if the members of his family had not prevented him, he would have given away every farthing that came into his possession.

X. Another feature deserving of notice, in the character of this excellent minister, is that *he was no politician*. It is true, that during the revolutionary war, he did not attempt to stand on neutral ground; but took part openly and decisively in favour of his country. And there can be no doubt that, in a similar exigency, at any period, he would have thought himself perfectly justifiable in acting a similar part. Yet it is certain, that for a number of years prior to that contest, and from the establishment of the independence of his country, till the day of his death, he never allowed himself to appear as a party-politician, or to connect his name, or his influence, with either side, in the successive struggles which divided his friends and acquaintance. From the time of his settlement in New York, he never voted at a political election; he never appeared at a poll: nor did he ever attempt, on any occasion, to interfere, for the accomplishment of any political object. He had his opinions, indeed he could not but have them, of the men and the measures which at different times, solicited the public patronage. But he seldom made these opinions the subject of conversation, even in private companies, especially in mixed companies, he never carried them into the pulpit; and, above all, he never attempted by his exertions to help forward any political scheme or party. Attempts were more than once made, by friends whom he greatly respected and loved, to seduce him from this

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course. But he steadfastly resisted their solicitations, and kept himself aloof from their collisions and animosities to the last. It was in vain they urged, that clergymen have the same civil rights, and the same deep interest in the prosperity of their country, with other men. He admitted their premises, but denied their conclusion; and answered, though not in the words, yet in the spirit of Nehemiah of old, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?*

It will not be supposed, indeed, that as a minister of the gospel, he considered himself as precluded from explaining and inculcating those great principles of social order and duty, which are found in Scripture, and on which every teacher in the house of God is bound to insist, in their proper place and proportion, in his public ministrations. This duty he performed, and it is believed as faithfully as most ministers. But he carefully avoided intermeddling, either in speech or in action, with the party conflicts around him; nor could any one ever learn either from his prayers or his preaching, what were his feelings relative to those questions which filled the gazettes, and agitated the town-meetings of the day. And by avoiding the latter, it is certain that he was enabled with the more freedom, and without suspicion or offence, to accomplish the former.

By rigidly and steadily pursuing this course, he avoided much personal inconvenience and pain. He conciliated friendship, and maintained his influence with all parties. He prevented his time and attention from being absorbed by trivial objects, to the neglect of infinitely greater concerns. He avoided

* Nehemiah vi. 3.

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those collisions and alienations of social feeling, for which the zealous politician must always be prepared. He declined putting either his personal or official character in the power of every political ruffian, or newspaper scribbler. And, above all, he avoided what might have proved, and could scarcely have failed of proving, an obstacle both to the acceptance and usefulness of his ministry.

He had a firm persuasion, that it was not only desirable, but highly important, to all clergymen, to take this course of retirement and self-denial, with respect to party politics. He thought that, by adopting a different plan of conduct, their services to their country, whatever they might imagine to the contrary, were really little or nothing; while their injuries to the church were deep and lasting. He considered it as degrading the dignity of their office, as well as striking a deadly blow at their professional influence, to permit themselves to be even in opinion, identified with those noisy declaimers, and unprincipled intriguers, who, with the language of patriotism in their mouths, know no other guide than selfishness, no other God than ambition. And it was a matter of unfeigned regret with him, when he perceived that any of his brethren viewed the subject in a different light. But even with regard to those who totally differed from him, both in opinion and practice, on this subject, it never interfered with the most cordial affection and intercourse. Nay, it may with confidence be asserted, that, from the time of his leaving St. George's, until his death, he never on account of party politics, either lost or soured a friend.

XI. But though Dr. Rodgers was no politician, he did not consider himself by any means as exempted from the duties which belong to a good citizen. On

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the contrary, he was always prompt in obeying the calls of humanity and benevolence. Besides attending to his duty in several religious societies, of all which he was president; he found time to be one of the most active and useful members of the "Society for the Relief of Distressed Prisoners," and of the "Board of Trustees of the City Dispensary," in both of which, for a number of years, he presided. He was also a member of the "Manumission Society" of New York, and manifested a deep interest in the abolition of slavery, and in the success of plans for meliorating the condition of slaves. Nor did he, as is too often done, content himself with being a mere nominal member of these associations. He gave his time and labour, as well as pecuniary contributions for their support; and was always ready to go foremost in exertions to lessen the miseries, and promote the welfare of the children of affliction. As long as he retained his vigour of body and mind, few persons in the community took a more active part than he, in promoting and executing plans of enlightened and diffusive benevolence.

XII. Both the reputation and usefulness of Dr. Rodgers were doubtless promoted, and probably in no small degree, by *the peculiar and uniform dignity of his manners*. This part of his character was not only remarkable, but pre-eminent. If his manners had sometimes a degree of formality in them which excited the smile of the frivolous, they always manifested the polish of a well-bred gentleman, as well as the benevolence of a Christian; and never failed to command respect. He was grave without being starched, and dignified without reserve. He was habitually cheerful, and often facetious and sportive; but his sportiveness was always as remarkable for its taste and dignity as it was for the

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perfect inoffensiveness of its character. He was probably never known, in a single case, to let himself down in company, by undue familiarity, by levity, by coarse or unseasonable anecdotes, or by any rude invasion of the feelings of others. There was a uniformity, an urbanity, and a vigilance in his dignity, which plainly showed that it was not the result of temporary effort, but the spontaneous product of a polished, benevolent, and elevated mind.

There can be no doubt that this happy style of deportment, was of great service to him in every part of his life. By his dignified manners, he made a favourable impression on perfect strangers, and always inspired respect, wherever he went. By his manners he was enabled to keep at a distance the impertinent and the troublesome, without offending them; and thus to avoid much expense of time and comfort. By his manners he conciliated the confidence and veneration of all classes with whom he was called to have intercourse; for they were adapted to make an impression in his favour equally on the rich and the poor, the polished and the rude, the learned and the ignorant. And, more especially, by his manners, he, as it were, cast around him an influence, which repressed frivolity, impiety, and profaneness, and made his presence a pledge of decency and order. "There is something defective," says the eloquent Dr. Jay, "especially in a minister, unless his character produces an atmosphere around him, which is felt as soon as entered. It is not enough for him to have courage to reprove certain things; he should have dignity enough to prevent them; and he will, if the Christian be commensurate with the preacher, and if he walk worthy of God, who hath called us into his kingdom and glory"*

* Life of Winter, p. 299.

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This moral atmosphere surrounded Dr. Rodgers. And it was produced, not by moroseness or austerity; but by a peculiar, apostolical dignity, which every one instantly perceived, and which nothing but the most hardened and brutal profligacy was able to withstand.

XIII. Finally; let it not be thought beneath the dignity of biography to state, that Dr. Rodgers was always *attentive to his dress*. Like his manners and his morals, it was invariably neat, elegant, and spotless. He appeared to have an innate abhorrence of every thing like slovenliness or disorder about his person. And while there was nothing that indicated an excessive or finical attention to the materials or the adjustment of his clothing, it was ever such as manifested the taste of a gentleman. In this respect he resembled his friend and spiritual father, Mr. Whitefield, whose sayings and example on the subject he not unfrequently quoted.

The dress of our persons, like that of our thoughts, is undoubtedly important. No man ever neglected either, without impairing both his respectability and his usefulness. A clerical fop is, indeed, contemptible; but a clerical sloven, deserves no slight reprehension. It has been said, and probably with truth, that the person who has a remarkably pure and well ordered mind, will seldom fail to be neat and tasteful in his dress. It is certain that such a dress has a tendency to inspire respect, even among the most enlightened and reflecting classes of society; that it gives additional dignity to the presence, and additional force to the instructions, of him who wears it; and that almost all persons instinctively connect with it something of a corresponding character in his intellectual and moral endowments. If this be, in any degree, the case, it seems to follow,

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of course, that a well regulated and moderate, but habitual attention to this object, is incumbent on every Christian, but especially on every Christian who fills a public station.

As an author Dr. Rodgers never held an eminent place. His forte, was in action, not in writing, which he undertook with reluctance, and as seldom as possible. His publications were few. The following, it is believed, is a complete list.

I. "Holiness the Nature and Design of the Gospel of Christ;" a Sermon preached at Stockbridge, June 24, 1769, before the Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, of Berkshire county, State of Massachusetts; and published at their request.

II. "The Divine Goodness Displayed in the American Revolution:" a Sermon preached in New York, December 11th, 1783; appointed by Congress, as a day of public Thanksgiving throughout the United States.

III. "Three Sermons in the American Preacher."

IV. "The Faithful Servant Rewarded:" a Sermon delivered at Princeton, before the Trustees of the College of New Jersey, May 6th, 1795, occasioned by the death of the Rev. John Witherspoon, President of said College.

V. "A Charge delivered to the Rev. Joseph Bullen, at his designation to the Office of Missionary to the Chickasaw Indians."

VI. "The Presence of Christ the Glory of a Church:" a Sermon delivered November 6th, 1808, at the opening of the Presbyterian Church in Cedar street, New York.

These publications are all respectable in their kind. They furnish internal evidence that their author was a pious, enlightened, and judicious divine. But they all discover, what has been more than once

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hinted in the foregoing pages, that he had been too busy in the great and practical departments of his professional duty, to indulge himself in the luxuries of polite literature, or to attain the elegancies of fine writing; and that he had the pious magnanimity to prefer the former to the latter.

Such was DR. JOHN RODGERS! He was not without his infirmities; but they were spots in a luminary of full-orbed excellence; and no one was more ready than himself to acknowledge, that he was a miserable sinner, and that his proper place was at the footstool of Divine mercy. "Take him for all in all," the American church has not often seen his like; and will not it is probable, speedily or often "look upon his like again." In vigorous and original powers of mind, a number have exceeded him. In profound and various learning, he had many superiors. In those brilliant qualities, which excite the admiration of men, and which are much better fitted to adorn than to enrich, pre-eminence is not claimed for him. But in that happy assemblage of practical qualities, both of the head and the heart, which go to form the respectable man; the correct and polished gentleman; the firm friend; the benevolent citizen; the spotless and exemplary Christian; the pious, dignified, and venerable ambassador of Christ; the faithful pastor; the active zealous, persevering, unwearied labourer in the vineyard of his Lord; it is no disparagement to eminent worth to say, that he was scarcely equalled, and certainly never exceeded, by any of his contemporaries. He did far more good than many men of much greater talents and learning; and certainly had fewer faults than commonly fall to the share of greater genius.

The history of this excellent man is an instruc-

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tive one. Among a number of important lessons, it teaches us,

That personal character has an immediate and essential influence on official standing:

That ardent piety, exemplary deportment, habitual prudence, and unwearied diligence, are those qualities in a gospel minister, on which, under God, the greatest reliance is to be placed:

That the impression made by the exhibition of constant, uniform, and consistent Christian excellence, never fails to be deep, benign, and lasting:

That the more exclusively a minister of the gospel is devoted to his peculiar work, the greater will, ordinarily, be his comfort and his usefulness:

That the attainment of the best and noblest kind of eminence, in the sacred, as well as every other profession, is, humanly speaking, within the reach of many more than is commonly imagined:

That the most solid and lasting popularity is founded less on splendid pulpit eloquence, than on faithful and persevering pastoral labours:

That "them that honour the Lord Jesus Christ, he will honour:" Of course,

That that minister is in the fairest way to true honour, and the most desirable success, who lives most by faith on the Divine Redeemer, and who forgets his own glory, in the multitude of his desires and endeavours to advance the glory of him that sent him: And,

That he who sits as "King upon the holy hill of Zion," does continue to fulfil the promise long since made to his ministers, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

"To him be glory in the Church, throughout all ages, world without end! Amen!

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